

**HELPING VULNERABLE YOUNG PEOPLE MAKE A SUCCESSFUL  
TRANSFER TO SECONDARY SCHOOL: AN EVALUATION OF  
THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A NURTURE GROUP APPROACH**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study describes and evaluates an approach to supporting children at risk of failure to succeed as they transfer to secondary school. The Year 7 intervention project was based on knowledge and evidence from previous research into approaches and concerns regarding secondary school transfer and the historical use of nurture groups in schools. Secondary school transfer has long been identified as a time of risk for vulnerable children in the education system. In 1969 Nisbett and Entwistle concluded from a five year study that over 50% of students presented with identifiable problems in adjusting to secondary school, and in 2006 Atkinson was able to obtain children's perspectives of the difficulties they faced at transfer.

A project was negotiated to provide a support mechanism, based upon a nurture group model, for transfer within one maintained secondary school. This aimed to enable children identified as vulnerable by their primary schools, to access a small group setting for part of their time in Year 7 within which were opportunities for a range of experiences based upon nurture principles, in addition to support for the mainstream-based curriculum. The intervention was evaluated using both academic progress and analysis of subjective accounts of the children and involved school staff and parents, to provide evidence of the impact of this provision upon ten students participating in this intervention.

Findings indicated that all involved staff, students and parents considered the intervention worthwhile and beneficial. Most students made progress throughout Year 7, not demonstrating the statistical 'dip' that has previously, consistently been evidenced nationally. Whilst the results were promising, this was a small scale study based in one school and there was not a control group against which to compare student progress within the school. There is also the possibility of confirmation bias due to the expectations of staff, and of the "Hawthorne effect" of the novelty of the intervention.

I could not have achieved this without what I have learned from the willpower and courage of my Dad and Steve. Thank you to my Mum and Bec for their unwavering quiet support and to Ed for being there and getting me to the end.

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

This first chapter of the thesis provides background information regarding the reasons for the study, key literature upon which the study is based, and contextual factors which needed to be weighed in negotiation and implementation of this work. Subsequent chapters explain the theoretical framework upon which the study is based and methodological approaches used. Findings are presented and discussed, with conclusions drawn in relation to the aims of the research, contextual implications, links with previous research into the complexities of transfer, use of a nurture group to support vulnerable young people at transfer and limitations of the study and implications for practice and future research.

### **1.1 Purpose of this study**

The purpose of the intervention which forms the focus of this research was, within my practice as an educational psychologist, to work in collaboration with staff from the special educational needs department of a secondary school to support vulnerable young people transferring from primary school.

Research into pupil transfer between primary and secondary school has demonstrated that for a significant minority of students, this key transition in their education is problematic, as evidenced, for example, by research commissioned by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) and carried out by Galton, Gray and Ruddock (1999). This investigation found that a high number of students do not maintain the rates of progress evident throughout Key Stage 2 in their basic attainment following transfer to secondary school. The authors note:

We estimate that up to two out of every five pupils fail to make expected progress during the year immediately following the

This study, alongside many others which identify similar trends, is explored further in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.

As an educational psychologist my job entails working as an applied psychologist within a defined geographical area for my employing Local Authority to support a cluster of schools in their work with children with special educational needs, alongside contributing to wider school development, as negotiated with school staff. A number of feeder primary schools with which I worked, had expressed concerns regarding identified vulnerable students and how they could best be supported in Year 7, clearly anticipating that the trends reported by Galton et al. (1999) would characterise these students.

## **1.2 Background**

Previously in my work within a Behaviour Support Team, instigated in response to the National Behaviour and Attendance Strategy, Behaviour Improvement Programme, (Department for Education and Skills, 2003), I was involved in a multi-agency team developing support mechanisms in a large secondary school and its feeder primaries. One aspect of this work was to set up and evaluate three nurture groups. Nurture groups are an additional provision offered by some schools to support children with social, emotional or behavioural difficulties in a small group setting for part of the school week. Nurture groups are often presented as an effective support mechanism for vulnerable children, particularly by the founders of nurture group methodology Bennathan and Boxall (2000). However, it is a costly provision which many schools are unable to implement fully. Despite this, in recent years there has been a resurgence of nurture groups, such as those evaluated in Glasgow by Gerrard (2005), and also use of 'nurture principles' adapted more widely in schools to

support an increasing range of students (Scott and Lee, 2009), as identified by Ofsted (2011). More detailed critique of these evaluations is included in Chapter 2, Section 2.6.

From 2006, supporting secondary school transfer was targeted as a priority for Educational Psychologists (EPs) within my employing Local Authority: to enable 'linked-up' working between high schools and their principal feeder primary schools, additional EP visits for vulnerable students were organised during the second part of Year 6, (followed up with small group work in their secondary school), providing the young people with an opportunity to explore emotions and anxieties about moving to a larger school environment prior to this move and to receive targeted support in the early part of Year 7. This policy development led me to believe that I had a role to play in supporting the secondary school with which I was currently working at the start of this study in April 2009 to help a group of vulnerable young people have a more positive experience of transfer, through the application of nurture group principles following school transfer.

Nurture groups were developed by educational psychologist Marjorie Boxall, (Boxall (2002), in response to a need identified in east London in the 1960s, where an increased number of children were highlighted in schools as expressing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (Cooper, Arnold and Boyd, 2001). Nurture groups were established to enable such children to be supported and taught in a smaller group setting, using nurturing principles, for part of their time in school (Iszatt and Wasilewska, 1997). Nurture groups are discussed further in Chapter 3, section 3.3.1. The Boxall Profile (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998) is the instrument most widely used in selection and monitoring of children accessing nurture group provision. The Boxall Profile is described further in Chapter 4, section 4.3.5.

### **1.3 Major themes identified from key literature**

The rationale for the planning and implementation for this study, which aimed to address young people's vulnerability at secondary school transfer, was based upon previous research into the problems of transfer, previous attempts to enhance the transfer experience for students, and the use of nurture groups and their effectiveness in supporting vulnerable children in general, and secondary transfer in particular.

In this study 'transfer' refers to moving from one school to another, whereas 'transition' refers to progressing through phases of the education system.

#### ***(i) Research into secondary school transfer over the last 30 years***

The Observational Research and Classroom Learning Evaluation (ORACLE) study (Galton and Willcocks, 1983 and Delamont and Galton, 1986), which took place over the years from 1975-1980, has perhaps been the largest in-depth study in classroom practice and schooling prior to and following secondary transfer which has been undertaken to date. The study took the opportunity to follow a group of children from their last term in primary school into secondary, thus providing detailed longitudinal data describing students' experiences of transfer. It highlighted significant changes to students' educational experience once at secondary school: students tended to be more isolated in their learning at secondary school, with more independent working expected in the classroom. The deceleration of progress of approximately 40% of students post-transfer did not recover for many students as they moved thorough Year 7 (Delamont and Galton, 1986).

In 1999 the DfEE published its findings from commissioned research carried out by Galton, Gray and Ruddock (1999) which, in part, replicated the ORACLE study. In order to explore the effects of secondary school transfer, a review of current practice was carried out via

questionnaires to head teachers. Academic results were scrutinised for schools in Suffolk LEA, and Ofsted data used, in addition to a review of other existing literature, including the ORACLE study. Findings reported by Galton et al. (1999) showed that there was an overall dip in attainment for the cohort, and that a range of strategies were employed to support students in both their primary and secondary schools, but without a consistent approach for all schools. Galton et al. (1999) conclude from the data:

When all of these findings are taken together there is good evidence to suggest, therefore, that transfer under present conditions results in up to two out of every five pupils failing to make expected progress during the year immediately following the change of school.

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In short, despite endeavours to offer improved support to pupils prior to, during and following their transfer to secondary school, the Galton et al. (1999) study clearly indicated very little, if any progress toward resolving the difficulties identified by the 1983 Galton and Willcocks study: 40% of pupils remained vulnerable to disrupted progress following the move.

### ***(ii) Students' experiences of transfer in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century***

More recent research, using quantitative methods underpinned by a positivist approach, to 'measure' children's progress and emotional responses at transfer is now available (for example Baines, Blatchford and Kutnick, 2003). Tobbell (2003), meanwhile, carried out an interpretive study of transfer to secondary school, aiming to provide a rich picture of the experience of transfer, from which meanings of experience would become apparent. Atkinson (2006) built upon this study and exploring the views of 12 pupils throughout their experience of transfer. Using semi-structured interviews at the end of Year 6 and at the beginning and end of Year 7, children were given the opportunity to report their experiences. These studies are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, Section 2.6, but in brief, key findings were the importance of pupils' feelings of being lost, being treated differently by

adults and having a reduced sense of belonging in their new schools. Suggestions were made from a pupil perspective to improve transfer for future cohorts. Whether research into pupils' experience of transfer (Durkin, 2000; Tobbell, 2003; Atkinson, 2006) has changed practices within schools remains to be explored.

### ***(iii) Vulnerability of students at transfer***

Students can be at increased vulnerability at secondary school transfer for a number of reasons. Reliable prediction at an individual level remains elusive, but to inform targeted risk reduction, the following vulnerability markers are suggested by available research:

Table 1:1: Pupils at risk at transfer

<b><i>Attributes</i></b>	<b><i>Sample studies highlighting increased vulnerability</i></b>
Gender: Boys	Epstein & Mac an Ghaill (2001): educating boys is currently seen, both globally and locally, to be in crisis.
Age: young for year	DfE (2010); 'Month of Birth and Education': 10,000 summer-born children per year fail to achieve five grades A*-C at GCSE; this is higher than children born earlier in the school year.
Special Educational Needs (SEN)	Maras & Aveling (2006): young people with autism may find transition particularly hard. Students with learning disabilities had lower scores on an academic self-concept scale.  Evangelou, Taggart, Sylva, Melhuist, Sammons, Siraj and Blatchford (2008): children with SEN were more likely to be bullied at transfer.
Looked After Children	Brewin & Statham (2011); identified key factors that supported Looked After Children through transition, with the emphasis on the importance of planning and information-sharing between key stakeholders and offering holistic individualised support.

Taken together these findings illustrate unequal levels of vulnerability likely to be experienced at transfer. Some of the groups most likely to be at risk are boys, younger children, children with Special Educational Needs (SEN); and Looked After Children.

***(iv) Key approaches to promote successful transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3***

Considering the evidence over more than five decades with regard to the difficulties that a significant minority of young people encounter at transfer, with contingent difficulties in their academic progress, examples of effective intervention strategies to support secondary school transfer have been sought. Galton and Morrison (2000) surveyed schools across the country to investigate the range of support approaches used. A number were reportedly deployed in schools at a range of levels, including curriculum planning, social and personal support for pupils, and managerial adaptation to transfer processes, yet no evaluation of these was provided.

Other attempts reported include Summer schools which typically aim to enhance basic learning skills via group activities within the new school setting prior to school entry at the start of Year 7. Sainsbury, Whetton, Mason and Schagen (1998) report an evaluation of a literacy Summer school demonstrating positive impact for some students in a small scale study. Nicholls and Gardner (1999) meanwhile provide advice re: the need for curriculum continuity and support to ease the stress of the transfer, to augment and sustain any benefits which might arise from time-limited pre-entry “booster” initiatives such as Summer schools, although again, this study presents a limited research base for the suggestions provided, which is further discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.7.

A study of a ‘primary ethos’ approach for students’ first months or year in secondary school by Bryan and Treanor (2007) (explored in more depth in Chapter 2, Section 2.8.4) found positive impact on academic attainment for the targeted children compared to students who had a more traditional experience in their first year of secondary school. This intervention provided a social and curricular experience broadly similar to their primary school experience for the lowest attaining pupils in Year 7.



A particular development of this broad 'primary ethos' approach, to support vulnerable children at secondary transfer, is the nurture group (Boxall, 2002). Based in Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969), it considers that a lack of early positive attachment in child development can greatly exacerbate risks of later social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and that such difficulties can be prevented or redressed through provision of positive, attuned, responsive attachment relationships at later stages of affected children's development. Nurture groups provide a means of supporting children who typically have a history of disruptive or withdrawn behaviour (Sanders, 2007). More recently nurture groups have increasingly been used in secondary schools to provide support, within a 'primary ethos' approach.

***(v) Key research into the effectiveness of nurture groups***

Nurture groups have been used over time to support children and young people considered vulnerable to poor developmental and educational outcomes and to help them deal with attachment and social difficulties within their mainstream school setting. A wealth of research evidence (for example, Connolly, Hubbard and Lloyd, 2008; Binnie and Allen, 2008; Scott and Lee, 2009; Ofsted, 2011) has been gathered attesting to the effectiveness of nurture groups as an inclusive strategy.

Nurture groups, in their classic form, apply the concepts of Attachment Theory in practice (Bennathan and Boxall, 2000). The core aim is to provide a setting within school that can re-create the process of early learning, where the nurture teacher and support assistant provide a restorative experience of early nurturing care. The small group facilitates close proximity, structured routines and stability within which pupils can learn to manage emotions and develop positive relationships in a 'safe' environment (Greenlaugh, 1994).

Nurture provision ranges from traditional groups, such as those studied by Cooper, Arnold and Boyd (2001), Cooper and Lovey (1999) and Cooper and Whitebread (2007), all of which have relied heavily in evaluation of their impact upon data derived from the Boxall Profile (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998) and educational outcome measures, which have evidenced progress over time. The Boxall Profile provides a framework for assessment of children who are considered to express social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and is used by teachers to rate children's levels of functioning in a range of developmental and behavioural attributes. The Boxall Profile is described in more detail in Chapter 4, section 4.3.5.

Iszatt and Wasilewska (1997), Educational Psychologists in Enfield, using Code of Practice (DfEE, 2004) data differing levels of SEN, demonstrated that children judged as having higher levels of need, supported via a nurture group, made significant progress in just over one term; similar were findings reported in a similar study some 13 years later by Cooper and Whitebread (2007). Findings demonstrated that nurture groups did provide an effective approach for reducing emotional and behavioural difficulties in school, although flexibility in implementation, along with addition of further support media/mechanisms was needed for complex cases where children had suffered trauma. Overall nurture group provision was deemed an efficient and effective use of Local Authority resources and also an effective mechanism for improved home-school dialogue (Taylor and Gulliford, 2011). However, nurture group research has been largely confined to the early years and primary school settings for the first two decades following their establishment.

#### ***(vi) Nurture groups in secondary schools***

An interesting extension of nurture group provision can be seen in the move toward developing nurture groups in secondary schools. One of the first published accounts of this is reported by Cooke, Yeomans and Parkes (2008) who helped to establish and evaluate a nurture group, 'The Oasis', in a secondary school. This demonstrated how nurture group

principles could be closely adhered to but adapted to make the approach accessible and applicable to older students, thus providing a 'secure base' for vulnerable young people within a secondary school setting. Boxall Profile data indicated that all students who spent time in this nurture group had made progress in their developmental skills and in reducing behaviours that might otherwise inhibit involvement in school. Cooke et al. argue that this work provides a good base for offering advice and support to other secondary schools seeking an effective support strategy for vulnerable pupils following transfer. This study is investigated further in Chapter 3, Section 3.6.

#### **1.4 Previous Local Authority transfer support**

A number of studies, such as that reported by Sainsbury et al. (1998) indicate the probability that students with special educational needs will be vulnerable at times of change, such as school transfer, and that additional support and coherence of approach at this time are likely to help mitigate the effects of the changes encountered at transfer.

In another such study, within my own Local Authority, educational psychologists provided a strategic contribution to social inclusion and academic progress for vulnerable students, and evaluated mechanisms to support their transfer to secondary school. Hodson, Baddeley, Laycock and Williams (2005) co-ordinated a review of inclusive practice and the placements of pupils with special educational pre- and post-transfer within my employing local authority. Evidence indicated a high number of transfers to special school at the end of Year 6: a trend congruent with my own more recent experiences, and indicative of expectations that special needs which had been accommodated within students' primary schools were considered unlikely to be met – even with the additional resources which a statement of special educational needs could safeguard – within the county's mainstream secondary schools. Hodson et al. (2005) noted that:

Discussion with colleagues in the county suggested that, whilst primary schools supported pupils with special educational needs relatively well, the transfer to high school was often difficult for these pupils, their parents and their schools. p54

The review of practices at that time accentuated the need to increase the capacity of mainstream secondary schools in the county to meet the needs of all students, and particularly those most vulnerable to poor educational outcomes.

### **1.5 Specific aims of the current research**

The remit of this study was to set up and evaluate a nurture group approach within one secondary school, to support pupils judged as vulnerable in Year 6, as they approached secondary transfer. This intervention entailed my providing support and training to key school staff within the secondary school and obtaining data over the academic year to monitor the progress of students within the group, with a view to providing ongoing support to the school in helping vulnerable students in this way.

Students identified by primary school staff, taken alongside use of Boxall Profile data and recent Individual Education Plans, were nominated for inclusion in a specially established nurture group, where they would be taught by a primary-trained teacher, with Teaching Assistant (TA) support for English, Maths and Humanities throughout the year. In addition, students would be offered support by the same Teaching Assistant in mainstream class for other key subject areas.

### **1.6 Theoretical underpinnings and nature of the current study**

Student's more likely to find secondary school transfer difficult can do so for a number of reasons, this study uses the premise of attachment theory (Bowlby 1969, 1973, 1980) and its

ongoing development as a fundamental explanation for pupil's who fail to thrive and cope with changes encountered in this phase of their education. In contemporary use, attachment refers to an infant's emotional connection to an adult caregiver, providing comfort, support, nurturance or protection (Zeanah, Berlin and Boris, 2011). Bowlby (2003) added that it is this 'secure base' from which an infant is able to successfully explore the world. It is this link between secure attachments, the developing child and their characteristics which may offer explanations for young people's social and emotional difficulties (Bowlby, 1980).

Whilst this study uses the premised of attachment theory to understand difficulties and implement support for transfer, secondary schools do not operate in a vacuum. A child's cognitive development is shaped by genetic characteristics and proximal processes. Bronfenbrenner's (1995) bio ecological model provides this wider, superordinate, theoretical framework within this study. Bronfenbrenner explains child development through the interaction with their environment; it is this interaction which shapes human behaviour. The theory suggests that 'recipriocal determination' is what underpins child development. This approach, alongside attachment theory, can help map internal and external protective factors which enable some young people to thrive post-secondary school transfer, while others fare less well. Attachment theory is explored in more detail in Chapter 3, Section 3.2.1 and the Bio Ecological Model of development in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.1.

Based within these theories, the research takes a social constructivist standpoint and is designed used a pragmatic mixed methods approach (Johnson and Christenson, 2003), in that many of the data were collected via the use of qualitative research methods allowing for in-depth analysis of individual experience, while there is also quantitative, element to the study, allowing for analysis of data describing academic attainment and individual self-ratings of progress along a number of dimensions over time.

## **1.7 Research context**

The secondary school in which the study is situated is located within a large demographically mixed county council, where localities range from relatively affluent villages to areas of urban deprivation. The focus school is set in what had once been a mining town, but with the industry gone, the local community has suffered economic privations over the last two decades. The school had 665 pupils on roll, derived from seven main local feeder primary schools. A small number of the school population has a first language other than English (0.8%), while the proportion of students eligible for free school meals, at 23.2%, is higher than the national average of 15%, as identified by Department for Education statistics (DfE, 2010a). The immediate area surrounding the school is comprised predominantly of local authority-owned housing, with high levels of unemployment.

School statistics showed that the number of students with a statement of special educational needs was slightly above average, at 2.9% as compared to 2.7% nationally, whilst those supported for special educational needs overall fell below the national average, at 12.7% as compared to the national figure of 18.2% (DfE, 2010b). It was difficult to establish whether as a result of under-identification or that, despite the demographic trends there as relatively positive student progress. At the time of this study there were plans in place for the school to become an Academy in the near future (Academies Act, 2010).

Staffing had not been consistent; the majority of the Senior Management Team had changed over the previous two academic years, although the Special Educational Needs Department staff had remained more consistent. Despite support mechanisms in place for identified vulnerable young people, it was apparent that a number found coping with the move to secondary school challenging, evidenced by some Year 7 students ceasing to attend or being permanently excluded. The school's exclusion data for Year 7 were, for example, as

follows: in the academic year 2007/2008 there were two permanent exclusions and 34 fixed-term exclusions, for 2008/2009, one permanent exclusion and eight fixed-term exclusions, and for the year 2009/2010 one permanent exclusion and 31 fixed-term exclusions. Nationally the rate of fixed period exclusions has declined since 2006/07. In 2009/10 the national rate of fixed term exclusion was 4.46%, compared with 5.66% in 2006/07 (DfE, 2012). The school's data followed this pattern but was high for the first year of secondary school.

### **1.8 My role as the school's Educational Psychologist (EP)**

My role within the school as a local authority EP included working in collaboration with school staff to encourage Year 7 students to attend and engage in learning, and to identify and address factors placing students at risk of exclusion and / or under-achievement. Educational psychologists work at a range of levels within schools, via assessing and advising upon the needs of individual pupils, support via group work, training for staff, and contributing to school improvement at an organisational level (Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly, 2003).

Within the current study, in my role as educational psychologist for the school, I aimed to provide support, drawing on a coherent theoretical perspective and knowledge of research into both transfer and nurture group provisions and assist in collecting and analysing data from assessment over time on student progress. Working alongside stakeholders in the school, including the senior management team, pastoral coordinator, Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo), nurture group teacher and Teaching Assistant (TA), parents and students, my role was to be predominantly as researcher, whilst also providing consultative support regarding the selection of the group, using collaborative enquiry and encouraging participatory evaluation.

## 1.9 Research questions

From the existing literature and consultative collaboration with school staff in relation to the needs of the students provisionally identified as in need of enhanced support following secondary transfer, this study aimed to answer the following key questions:

- *What impact does being in a Year 7 nurture group have on young people's social and emotional skill development?*
- *What impact does participation in the nurture group have on the young people's academic performance?*
- *Has being in a nurture group for part of their time in Year 7 been helpful in the process of transfer to secondary school as perceived by the students?*
- *Do staff directly involved in the nurture group think it has provided an effective way of supporting vulnerable Year 7 students?*
- *What aspects of the intervention are considered to have contributed to/mitigated against providing effective support to Year 7 pupils?*

To address these broad questions the research uses qualitative and quantitative data, with the data corpus including measures at the start and end of Year 7 regarding the students' basic reading, spelling and numerical skills, emotional well-being and attitudes. Boxall Profile data were collected termly, and views of the young people sought over time. Additional opportunity for reflections from both staff and students were provided via focus group methodology



### **1.10 Planned impact of the study**

It was expected that the research findings would be used to inform development of support mechanisms within a three-year development plan, to support vulnerable students transferring to the focus secondary school.

The expected impact for participating students was that the supported transfer to secondary school, with consistent support from a small number of staff to ease the process and help maintain educational progress, would contribute to prevention / reduction of behavioural difficulties in the Year 7 nurture group sample, with a positive impact on their academic attainment. Incidental, secondary benefits were also anticipated, through staff increasing their knowledge of this supportive approach and more fully engaging with the most vulnerable students early on in Year 7 than would otherwise have been the case. It was hoped that future Year 7 students would benefit from the supportive culture and practices developed through the current one-year exploratory study.

### **1.11 Overview of the content and remit of the remainder of the thesis**

The process of transferring to secondary school for children at age 11 has historically been documented as problematic for a significant minority, in eroding continuity of academic progress and exacerbating social and emotional difficulties for more vulnerable students. Over several decades, a range of policies and related planning and supportive approaches have attempted to minimise this effect.

Theoretical understanding for this phenomenon in education within this research study is underpinned using two predominant frameworks: Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model of child development (2000): a systemic model incorporating the environments with which a

child interacts; and attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969): a psychodynamic theory which places emphasis on the importance of relationships in influencing children's lifespan developmental progress.

The remainder of the thesis is presented in five further chapters, comprising: two Literature Review Chapters, Methodology, two Analysis and Discussion of Findings Chapters and Conclusions.

The study sets out to build on the existing wealth of research into secondary school transfer and the role of the literature review, organised within two chapters, is to provide a comprehensive account of the literature attesting to, and seeking explanations for the difficulties so many children experience at secondary transfer, and effectiveness of interventions, which set the context for the study. The first literature review chapter provides an account and critique of previous research into transfer to secondary school, the negative effects and previously designed and evaluated interventions. The second literature review chapter investigates nurture group approaches as a preventative support strategy within schools, followed by a concluding synthesis to show how the areas addressed within the two literature review chapters have been drawn together to inform the present research study.

The methodology chapter sets out the over-arching aims of the study and the five principal research questions which the empirical study aims to answer. Research methods are discussed, along with the rationale for their selection and an account of their implementation. Ethical considerations are discussed and the mixed methods design is explained. The research procedure, methods of analysis and consideration of the potential threats to the trustworthiness of the findings and how these were addressed are also explored.

Analysis of findings is presented within two chapters, the first presenting analysis of the quantitative data describing academic progress and ratings at intervals throughout the transfer process, and the second, the qualitative analysis of data describing the subjective experiences of the 'nurture group' students, and other stakeholders. Key findings are discussed in relation to sets of data presented. A synthesis of findings is provided at the end of this chapter.

Conclusions are drawn from the research study, including limitations of the research, and, taking account of these, the potential future applications of the findings and suggested developments to be addresses through further research.

## **CHAPTER 2: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE REGARDING SECONDARY SCHOOL TRANSFER**

This chapter provides a summary of reviewing relevant studies of the problems encountered at secondary school transfer, and the nature and impact of interventions employed to support pupils. This review has enabled the identification of gaps in existing literature regarding transfer to secondary school and exploration of previously implemented strategies and research methodologies to shape the current study and identify key research questions.

### **2.1 Literature search strategy**

#### **2.1.1 Literature search focus**

The search strategy focused on research into the impact of secondary school transfer and its effects on pupil progress and indices of well-being; and also studies reporting the implementation of interventions aiming to prevent or reduce negative transfer experiences and outcomes, such as “mini-school” approaches, transition projects and nurture groups, via library catalogue, journal and internet search. Research was filtered for relevance of data derived from both quantitative and qualitative studies.

#### **2.1.2 Theoretical Framework**

The underlying theoretical framework for this study is from attachment theorists, such as Bowlby (1969), Ainsworth (1989) and Winnicott (1990). Attachment theory focuses upon infant-carer interactions. They argue that a child who receives responsive and sensitive

parenting from a primary caregiver is able to form an internal model of others as trustworthy and dependable, which is crucial for future development.

Bowlby (1969) built upon concepts from ethology and developmental psychology to suggest that if children are provided with a secure base for exploration of the world, this provides them with the skills needed to extend to exploration of relationships with peers and positive social development in later life. Attachment theory has raised awareness of the significance of the attachment relationship between a baby and its principal parenting figure(s), Bowlby (1969, 1973 and 1980), through the earliest relationships, children develop feelings of self-worth, a personal identity and a model of how others will react to them as individuals (Pringle, 1975).

Criticisms of attachment theory have noted the 'blame' element that may be apportioned when children have difficulties in later life; despite such sensitivities this model continues to underpin approaches in social care and within nurture groups in schools.

Geddes (2007) developed theoretical arguments in relation to the significance of attachment and the child in school. For some children, poor early attachments are considered to have established patterns that negatively affect behaviour in the classroom; for example, a child with avoidant attachment is likely to avoid or refuse support from the teacher and require an 'emotional safety barrier'; Geddes argues that such children are at increased risk of underachieving in school. Geddes explains that:

There is potential to replicate 'secure' experience in the practices and responses of a school.... to provide a framework in which the pupil can experience a reliable and secure base.'

P.59

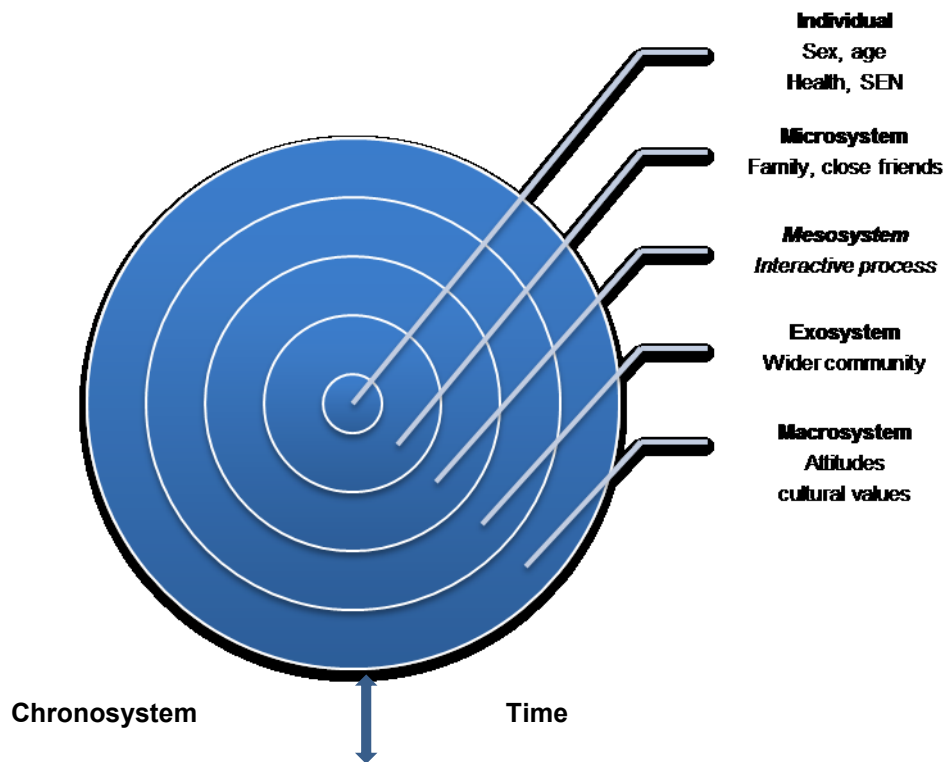
Attachment theory in education and models of adulthood attachment in later life (Crittenden, 2005) are discussed further in Chapter 3, Section 3.2.2.

Within this study there is a recognition that pupils' experiences of transfer exist within the wider context of school and society. Bronfenbrenner's (1995) bio-ecological model, and the notion of 'reciprocal determination' explain child development through the interaction with the nested layers of their environment.

Bronfenbrenner (1995) explains development as occurring through complex reciprocal interactions both within the immediate environment through 'proximal processes', and more distal interaction and influences within the wider environment at any particular time. He (1995) proposes a 'process-person-context-time (PPCT) model' to provide a framework which allows for investigation to take place, taking into account personal, interpersonal and environmental factors, as demonstrated in Figure 2.1. This approach can help map internal and external protective factors which enable some young people to thrive post-secondary school transfer, while others fare less well.

The bio-ecological model puts the individual at the centre, with a wide range of biogenetic and other personal characteristics which with, independently, in combination, and in complex interactions with external systems, influence development. Beyond this are a number of 'microsystems' comprising family, close friends and schools, for example: these are systems within which the developing and/or intensive interactions which affect the child, and which, equally, the child influences.

Figure 2.1: Summary of Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological model



The 'mesosystem' comprises systems with which the child does not interact directly, but where events and interactions can, nonetheless, affect the child. An example here is the parent's workplace: although the child may never enter this system, influences on the parent (e.g. stress; payment; job satisfaction) are likely to affect parent-child interactions within the child's home). Within the PPCT the chronosystem encompasses change or consistency over time, not only in the characteristics of the person over the life course but also across historical time in the environment in which the person lives.

Bronfenbrenner (1995) proposed a triadic principle between individual and their setting to explain ecological transitions, for example a change of school invariably involves a change in the role of the individual. Explanations for differing experience of and outcomes from school transfer can be partially explained by the interaction of the child in their micro and macro

ecological surroundings in that for some the ecology provides protective elements, which are lacking for others (Masten, Best and Garmezy, 1990).

## **2.2 Questions addressed by the literature review**

Research into transfer and interventions applied, to help mitigate the problems, are reviewed in this chapter to elicit what evidence there is of the impact of transfer on children's emotional, social and academic development, identifying in particular;

- why do some children not recover from initial difficulties experienced by most at transfer;
- what individual factors are a risk or can be protective;
- what school factors affect transfer; and
- what has been tried to support young people at transfer and how effective has this been.

The child's accounts of their experience of transfer are also considered, alongside a review of how children's perspectives have been harnessed in planning support interventions, and to what effect. Specific attention is given to how nurture groups have been used to support transfer, and whether there is evidence of this being an effective approach at this time of change. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

## **2.3 Early seminal studies into transfer**

Nisbett and Entwistle (1969) and Youngman (1978) demonstrated a significant minority of students fail to thrive at this time in their education. The largest study into the effects of school transfer at age 11 was provided by the ORACLE (Observation, Research and Classroom Learning Evaluation) study (Galton and Willcocks, 1983). From the collation of



data on the impact of transfer between 1975 and 1980, clear deterioration in some young people's academic engagement were evident following their move to their secondary schools.

Table 2.1 provides a summary of the main studies into transfer from the late 1960s to the 1990s. It would appear that over this time, and indeed until the present day, a minority of young people have consistently failed to maintain progress within the education system at this time.

Recurrent themes can be seen in these historical studies. The changes in pedagogic approaches which characterise secondary teaching have a considerable impact, and whilst most pupils re-adjust there is a significant minority of vulnerable pupils who appear to have ongoing difficulties in adapting to their secondary education and/or recovery from a poor start. This group was identified by Nisbett and Entwistle in 1969.

The longitudinal study of Nisbett and Entwistle (1969) collated attainment data and personality measures each year for pupils aged age 11 to 14 years in 45 primary and 20 secondary schools. No one year could be identified as the best age at which to transfer, but the study did conclude that those with lower ability levels initially, particularly those with special educational needs (SEN) were more likely to find transfer problematic.

Youngman (1978), based at the School of Education in Nottingham University, investigated how the transfer process affected individuals, in both rural and urban schools, using measures of intellect, personality, self-concept and attitude pre- and post-transfer. Youngman suggested two views of transfer: that it is detrimental to children's progress, or that a novel situation such as a new school fosters development, providing extra stimulation, as had been suggested by the Plowden Report (DES, 1967).

Table 2.1: Key historical studies into secondary school transfer

Study	Type of research	Research aims	Measures used	Main findings	Learning points for this study
Nisbett & Entwistle (1969)	Longitudinal quantitative study over 5 years with large sample in both urban and rural schools.	To investigate at what age children should transfer to secondary school and if the change from primary to secondary school affects children's' progress.	Ability assessments, performance measures and personality and attitude tests at ages 11, 12, 14 & 14.	Not possible to identify any one year as the 'correct' to transfer. Those with poorer learning skills had greater difficulty in coping with transfer. Unnecessary sharp changes in organisation and teaching methods are likely to be harmful.	SEN pupils are more likely to find transfer problematic. There is no one 'good' age at which to transfer but a smooth transition is important for success.
Youngman (1978)	Quantitative data gathered pre- and post-transfer.	To measure/determine the nature of individual reactions to school transfer and attempt to show different patterns of adjustment.	Schools in rural and city settings compared, similar not matched. Cluster analysis Standardised measures of; ability, achievement, attitude to school and personality.	Six 'types' of adjustment found, two considered of particular importance; labelled as 'disenchanted' and 'worried'.	Particularly vulnerable groups of pupils are identified. Teaching style is important. For most the negative effects are short-term.
Galton & Wilcocks (1983)	Part of ORACLE study. Mixed-methods. Nationwide longitudinal study.	To investigate the anxieties, academic motivation, attitudes and experiences of children through transfer. Also a focus on changes in styles of teaching at transfer.	Observations over time. Academic performance measures. Anxiety scale. Comparison of a range of types of schools.	Similar patterns of behaviour in a range of schools. Differences found more at an individual pupil level Individual teacher approaches important. Anxiety regarding transfer peaked from June-Nov.	The role of individual teachers and their teaching style is important to children. Negative effects are short term, pre-and post-transfer.

Measor & Woods (1984)	Ethnographic study. Interpretive focus on the subjective experience of children.	To obtain pupil perspectives on transfer to a comprehensive school. Aimed to get close to the child's experience as researcher.	Case study using three form classes in one year group in one school. Numerous pupil interviews from three form groups over time. Observations in the classroom.	Planned transition programmes help. Pupil anxieties are high at first but modify within a few weeks. Those from working-class background more adversely affected.	Provides a pupil's perspective of transfer. Specifically planned programmes to support transfer helped. Mostly the effects were short-term and vulnerable pupils coped less well.
Galton, Gray & Ruddock (1999)	DfEE commissioned report. Literature and effective practice review. Quantitative use of existing data focussed upon	Review of previous studies and national data. Information gathering regarding current strategies used to support transfer.	Review of findings of key studies into transfer. Ofsted data. Headteacher questionnaires sent out regarding procedures and practices to support transfer.	Estimate that up to 2 of 5 pupils fail to make expected progress in the year post transfer. A range of approaches are used but not consistently. Need for further research and development for transfer and for schools to have more one focus evaluation of progress.	Large numbers of pupils fail to make academic progress post-transfer. A need for further investigation into the problem of transfer and for schools to closer evaluation procedures.

Youngman identified six key groups of students post-transfer, classified as: academic; capable; disenchanted; worried; contented and disinterested. Of particular interest to this study are the 'worried' and 'disinterested' pupils identified who presented as having ability and found transfer an anxious experience or who engaged less well in their education once in a larger school setting, and the 'disenchanted' group, which comprised children of high ability who, early in their secondary education, appeared to have lost interest in learning. The value of this study lies in the depth of information regarding a range of student experiences.

Youngman provides insight into individual differences, although does not go as far as to suggest specific clusters of influences affecting outcomes for children, such as predicting which children would be in which group, or ways in which these difficulties might be prevented or rectified. Youngman concluded that:

The six reactions described (here) not only verify that there are substantial differences in patterns of adjustment after transfer, but also offer guidance on identification and treatment. p288

Youngman's evidence would imply that the secondary school environment had negatively impacted upon some students' engagement in learning, although cannot specify in what ways.

Galton and Willcocks (1983) carried out the ORACLE study in three contrasting local educational authorities, from 1975 to 1980, and followed a cohort of children from their last term in primary school into secondary. Observations of teachers and pupils in classrooms were carried out and data gathered during the final term before leaving primary school and again at the end of the first year in secondary school. These longitudinal data included:

- measures of pupil enjoyment of school, levels of motivation and anxiety (using 'What I Do In School' (WIDIS), Bennett, 1976);
- basic reading skills attainment using versions of the Richmond tests of reading, language and mathematics skills (France and Fraser, 1975); and
- systematic observations in a small number of lessons to trends evident in their primary schools.

Galton and Willcocks (1983) found that anxiety levels for the majority of students were highest in June, prior to transfer, and had peaked and was declining by November after transfer; however, for 10% of students, this had not reduced to the pre-transfer level. This is similar to findings by Nisbett and Entwistle (1969), suggesting that the majority of students adjust after a short period of time, but a significant minority continue to have difficulties after the first term in secondary school.

While this large scale study is now dated, it remains one the most thorough, providing both academic attainment data and observations of teaching approaches, taking a positivist approach overall. However, data from observations were gathered at the start of each term, which may not be reflective of engagement throughout the academic year. Whilst analysis of observations in this study was broad; the researchers did not attempt a detailed theoretical explanation for the dip in progress, nor were other more complex aspects of changes in school life factored in, such as the impact of different levels of ability and/or adolescent developmental factors, family and or/community influences, or the perspectives of the students themselves.

Measor and Woods (1984) explored the child's subjective experience of secondary school transfer in an ethnographic study. A case study approach included pupil interviews over

time and classroom observations. Findings showed that pupils thought planned programmes for transfer had been supportive, and likely to comprise a protective influence. However, most of the effects of these programmes were found to be time-limited and, as with other studies at this time, vulnerable pupils coped less well. The study took place in three groups within only one secondary school and therefore has limited generalisability, but was an early attempt to use the child's voice to understand transfer.

Research for the DfES by Galton, Gray and Ruddock (1999) which, in terms of design, in many ways replicates the 1983 ORACLE study, yielded very similar results to the ORACLE study in that 40% of students were again found to show an academic 'dip' in progress following transfer to secondary school. Use of questionnaires to head teachers, academic results for schools in Suffolk LEA and the Office for Standards in Education Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) data, showed an overall dip in attainment had occurred for many pupils despite the range of support strategies employed. There was, however no consistent approach in place for all schools.

Findings from this commissioned research included a review of current practices to support transfer: that negative outcomes for approximately 40% of students continued to be evident clearly suggests that, overall, the impact of these 'support' initiatives was negligible. Galton et al. (1999) concluded that there was good evidence to suggest that transfer resulted in up to two out of every five pupils failing to make expected progress during the year immediately following the change of school. They fail, however to differentiate with any confidence between those students who are more likely to have difficulties, or which of the reported support strategies has a positive effect for whom.

Overall, this early research summarised above would suggest that transferring to secondary school disrupts continuity of progress for many students and can change the way in which

they approach their future education. While many children do mediate school transfer effectively and sustain their prior level of engagement, motivation and progress, a significant minority do not. Galton et al. (1999) summarised:

- At transfer, most attention has been given to ensuring that the move from one school to another works smoothly administratively and that pupils' social and personal concerns are dealt with.
- In matters of curriculum continuity problems remain.
- Pupils can sometimes fail to make connections between working hard and later achievements and often feel that the transition from *primary* to *secondary* school student is not reflected in the ways that teachers regard and relate to them.
- Some groups of pupils appear to be at greater risk than others. For example, SEN pupils, those from certain ethnic groups and boys in inner cities are of particular concern.
- A number of schools aware of these problems have been actively seeking innovative solutions, both in terms of transitions and transfers. However, these initiatives have rarely been evaluated in ways that would make it possible to generalise to other schools.

Evidence from early studies suggests that those with SEN are likely to be most vulnerable, but gender, social class and personality differences can also be seen as present day factors. Investigation of the 'problem' at transfer continues to the present day, as shown in key studies summarised in Table 2.2.

From this wide breadth of investigations into the effects of transfer over time, and attempts to mitigate the negative effects, there appears to have been little change over the past decade. There are still a significant number of pupils who fail to do well post-transfer, although the majority of pupils do cope well, after an initial adjustment period. The following section explore some of the more distinct factors investigated in the transfer debate, including the age of pupils, their social and emotional skill development and those who are likely to be most vulnerable.

Table 2.2: Key 21<sup>st</sup> Century studies into secondary school transfer

Study	Type of research	Research aims	Measures used	Main findings	Learning points for this study
Durkin (2000)	Action Research Organisational/attachment focus. Interpretivist approach, social constructivist view of transfer.	Transition: The Child's Perspective. Pilot study of a new process to support transition.	Use of a systemic framework to analyse the impact of externally imposed changes.	Class discussion. Booklet created by children for new CT, EP provided the framework. On-going use and review in school. Effective systems put in place to enable children to express their thoughts and feelings at the time of transition.	Provides a child's perspective and a practical support approach to enable children to explore feelings about transfer.
Ofsted (2002)	Report into the effectiveness of transfer arrangements. Review of a pilot study September 2000 and National Strategy 2001.	To evaluate the effectiveness of a range of strategies employed to support transfer, including summer schools, catch-up programmes for English and Maths, transition units and teacher training.	Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) visits to 32 primary school and 16 secondary schools in 8 LEAs. Collation of data; induction into Year 7, transfer assessment data, curriculum continuity, quality of teaching Year 7 & 8 and support provided for learning in Year 7.	Continuity in the curriculum continued to be a weakness. Pastoral arrangements and support helped children move to secondary school. Ongoing variation existed in transfer of assessment data. There was insufficient discussion between teachers in key stages 2 and 3.	An ongoing need for better planning for transfer. Support for children's emotional needs was beneficial.
Tobbell (2003)	An interpretive study of transfer to secondary school. Sociocultural	To allow the experiences and feelings of students to emerge as a basis for theorising and generating psychological models about	Qualitative interviews In a large girl's high school in NW England. Semi-structured interviews. Self-contained focus group.	Themes emerged; School as community Adult or child? What makes a good teacher?	Identifies key aspects important to pupils in the transfer



	theory, learning is embedded in both social and cultural contexts.	transition.	Thematic analysis.	The learning experience Feeling lost.	process, which can guide supportive planning and intervention.
Zeedyk, Gallacher, Henderson, Hope, Husband & Lindsay (2003)	Large scale study to seek primary and secondary aged pupil's, parents views regarding secondary school transfer including concerns, skills perceived to be useful and suggested means of support.	To compare results between the four groups of participants.	Survey developed and issued to 2000 primary and secondary school pupils, teachers and parents across 9 primaries and 1 high school in Scotland and England.	Parental concerns were similar to those of pupils, including bullying, getting lost and workload. The things they looked forward to were similar across groups - new subjects and friends. Differences were found in the skills that would be useful. Suggestions made for easing transition.	Key concerns identified from pupil and parental perspective. Provides teacher views.
Chedzoy & Burden (2005)	Qualitative study pre- and post-transfer.	To assess children's attitudes to primary-secondary school transfer. To explore ways in which valid and reliable information could be obtained from students prior to and following transfer from primary and secondary school.	Questionnaire devised based upon previous transfer research in 5 primary and 5 secondary schools. Triangulation of data carried out.	The vast majority of students were looking forward to school transfer. Some gender difference emerged from the data with regard to aspects most enjoyed in their new school. Most had a positive experience of transfer and the standard of work expected in Year 7 was less challenging than had been anticipated.	Not all students find transfer difficult. For some it is an exciting experience.
Atkinson	Longitudinal	Investigation into Pupils'	Individual semi-structured	Best practice	Gives detailed

(2006)	design, cross section of pupils selected.	Views and Experiences of the Transfer from Primary to Secondary School in a LA. What pupils find helpful during their transfer from primary to secondary school. How pupils' views of their experiences can inform future practice to support Y6 and Y7 transfer.	interviews with 12 pupils. Interviews with key teachers and Heads of Year 7. Use of Tobbell's key themes to aid analysis.	recommendations made Including; involvement of parents, involving pupils in planning, communication of bullying procedures, teacher support for helping management of homework demands	pupil views as they experience transfer. Provides staff views of how children cope which enable future improvements to be made.
Qualter, Whiteley, Hutchinson & Pope (2007)	Collaborative research within one high school to support transfer, measured in terms of Emotional Intelligence (EI).	To investigate whether pupils with higher measures of EI pre-transfer cope better with the process and to investigate whether a programme designed to support EI skills can increase levels of EI post-transfer.	Two Year 7 cohorts from a rural high school in UK, one as control group. EI intervention took place with the experimental group. Standardised EI measures taken pre and post transfer; self-concept profile used; school report of concerns obtained; attendance figures scrutinized; and academic attainment at the end of Year 7.	Pupils with average/high EI cope better with transfer. Pupils with a low baseline EI respond well to intervention programmes.	Demonstrates how a specific intervention to support pupil's emotional experience of transfer can be effective. Vulnerable students benefitted from this approach.
Gillison, Standage & Skevington (2008)	Part of World Health Organisation study regarding Quality of Life (QoL) changes following secondary school transition.	To investigate changes in QoL immediately following the transition to secondary school.	Self-report questionnaires on 3 occasions over 10 weeks post-transfer measuring need satisfaction.	21% of students demonstrated improvement in QoL. Suggestions for support for needs for autonomy and relatedness predicted as most likely route to improve QoL over transition.	Demonstrates that a number of students cope well with transfer but not all. Further support is needed for some aspects of need.

Ashton (2008)	Large scale multi-method study providing qualitative data regarding children's views their thoughts of secondary school transfer at the end of Year 6. Part of a two year Neighbourhood Renewal Fund project.	To provide an insight into a child's perspective of transfer to enable future changes to better support the process.	Children across schools within the district were sent questionnaires. Rating scales or tick boxes used as well as an additional comments section.	Most students wanted as much experience of their new school as possible. They demonstrated mixed feelings about moving school. Friendships were an important issue. Bullying and getting lost were key concerns. Children can inform the transition process and contribute to ongoing improvement.	Key factors important to students identified, provides child's perspective into the support they think needed at transfer.
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Research into the effects of transfer to secondary school, and attempts to understand these, continue until the present day. Some of the most recent studies into secondary school transfer, post this study, are summarised below in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3: Most recent studies into secondary school transfer

Study	Type of research	Research aims	Measures used	Main findings	Links with this study
West, Sweeting & Young (2010)	Longitudinal study into vulnerable groups at transfer.	To investigate the consequences of transfer on well-being and educational attainment.	Data from West of Scotland 11 to 16 study. Children surveyed from age 11 in 1994 and followed up aged 13 and then 15.	There are longer-term effects of transfer on pupil well-being and learning. The impact is diverse. Individual characteristics were more important	Individual differences showed in the longer term outcomes.

			Self- completed questionnaires and mini-interviews.	predictors than primary schools attended to future success at secondary school.	
Bailey & Baines (2012)	Longitudinal non-experimental relational study.	To better understand the characteristics of pupils who are most likely to have negative outcomes and transition from primary to secondary school.	Over 130 pupils completed a resiliency and school adjustment questionnaire pre- and post-transfer. Teacher reports on pupils' adjustment and risk/resilience factors at these times.	Risk factors were most predictive in teacher rated outcomes. Pupil-ratings were most predictive for resilience factors. High levels of specific resilience factors in primary may leave those with SEN more vulnerable.	Those most vulnerable who had been highly supported in primary school found transfer most difficult.
Bloyce & Frederickson (2012)	Evaluation of transfer intervention for vulnerable students from a critical realist perspective.	To evaluate levels of school concerns, for those in targeted intervention, as identified as vulnerable pupils, during the first term of secondary school.	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and The School Concerns Questionnaire (SCQ) administered on three occasions. Comparison benchmark group used.	The support programme impacted positively on targeted pupils' levels of school concern as compared to the benchmark group.	Support intervention post-transfer demonstrated a positive impact in limiting concerns in school for the most vulnerable pupils.
Lyons & Woods (2012)	Mixed-methods case study evaluation linked to resilience theory.	To evaluate the effectiveness of a support intervention group during and after transition to secondary school.	9 children. SDQ, SCI, Focus Groups and Parental / Teacher Interviews. Thematic Analysis of qualitative data.	Qualitative findings show improvements in children's social-emotional well-being and social skills. Importance of intervention ability to address pupil and parental concerns highlighted. Theoretical models of 'support for student resilience' proposed as a result.	Intervention group in Year 7 was seen to be effective in addressing pupil and parent concerns.
Norgate, Osborne &	Longitudinal study into	To use Myself as a Learner Scale (MALS) to	MALS completed by pupils in Year 6 through	Significant drop in MALS scores from Years 6 to 7	MALS scores dropped over

Warhurst (2013)	academic self-perception over transfer period.	track pupils confidence in their ability to succeed in learning tasks over time, in particular over transfer.	to Year 10 in three mixed comprehensive schools. National Curriculum level scores also obtained over time.	and a smaller drop again between Years 7 and 8. Girls scored lower than boys. Higher attaining pupils had higher average MALS scores.	transfer, in particular SEN pupils were vulnerable to this.
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## **2.4 Age and development / maturation factors**

### **2.4.1 At what age is it best to transfer**

Transfer to secondary school has historically been thought about in two ways. Galton et al. (2000) note that there is a belief by some that students will adjust and cope with this large change in their educational lives as it is a 'rite of passage'. Another is that there is a need to smooth this passage through the creation of an initial phase in secondary school, to allow for increased social and emotional development of pupils, and to some extent replicate that of primary schooling, particularly for more vulnerable pupils.

Dutch and McCall (1974), in Scotland, carried out a quasi-experimental study to examine whether or not a 'clean cut' transfer between primary and secondary school was likely to cause adverse effects on students' attainment and emotional adjustment. A transition unit was specifically set up in some secondary schools providing some protection from the larger school, by exposing children to fewer teachers and classrooms, aiming to reduce anxiety and contribute to an improvement in attitudes to school throughout the time of transfer. A comparison group of students transferred straight into secondary school without any specific adaptation being made. A cross-sectional approach was used to measure students' attainment, anxiety and attitudes over time after transfer.

School size was evidenced as an important factor; those children who had attended small primary schools particularly benefitted from the transition department. The transition department did not appear to have had a major impact on academic attainment, but students were found to be better adjusted in the social and emotional domains than those who had not had this experience. The Dutch and McCall (1974) study provides useful insight into a

supportive intervention at transfer, suggesting that adaptation to inhabit post-transfer is beneficial.

More recently, Ward (2000) in New Zealand, investigated children's reactions to teaching in their new educational setting at age 11: two-year intermediate (middle) schools were established to bridge the transfer years, some of which were then extended to four years. These classes aimed to combine the consistent classroom approach of primary education, augmented by incremental exposure to specialist teaching in subject areas, more like the 'regular' secondary school. Ward tracked 18 students, in four different schools, as they progressed through transfer using pre- and post-transfer interviews. Parental interviews further added to the rich picture of the children's experiences.

Ward found that children's initial reactions and concerns centred around organisational issues, such as coping with daily routines and expectations. Those who entered 'full' secondary school later had by then acquired the added maturity to help them cope better. Ward suggests the potential of a more gradual transfer process, and that a 'clean cut' change is likely to be more problematic for less developmentally mature pupils. However, since the study was carried out in a small number of schools, with a small sample of students, generalisability needs to be questioned.

#### 2.4.2 Social and emotional skill development and the effects of transfer

Moving from childhood into the teenage years is almost synonymous with the move to 'big' school. Galton, Morrison and Pell (2000) argue that the history of the education system in England may have created the socially constructed view of the 'middle years' of development, rather than this forming an otherwise notable period within the lifespan developmental process.

Lucey and Reay (2000) argue that the prospect of going to 'big school' presents children with a dilemma which is central to the experience of growing up in the wider sense. They state;

In order to gain freedom and autonomy from adult regulation one must be willing to relinquish some measure of the protection which that regulation affords. p 203

A Norwegian study of secondary school transfer, by Kvalsund (2000), looked at the contextual and social meanings embedded in children's understanding of this life process. Kvalsund argues the importance of pupil awareness of the process of transfer and pupils' social construction of the meaning that this presents, describing this as a 'life course perspective'. Secondary school transfer is a marked occurrence that is socially created and recognised as a cultural turning point in a young person's life; it provides order and predictability to a trajectory that is followed by all individuals within that society.

By examining perspectives of those involved in transfer in both smaller and larger rural school in Norway, Kvalsund found that it was not just the individual choices and benefits experienced by students that impacted upon their experiences, but also changes in patterns of relationships. Kvalsund notes that different children respond in different ways to this change process. For some it takes a long process to fully adapt and for others it is positive experience. Kvalsund explained that;

The transition represents a lengthy period of uncertainty and risky experimentation. This takes place in the form of complicated symbolic interaction between various groups of pupils. p420

For some pupils, by the middle of their first year into secondary school they seemed en route to being non-conformists, but as with other research, such as the ORACLE and its associated studies, showed most students do adapt well. Children in the study, as in previous studies, demonstrated high levels of anxiety at transfer, although again, this did not



remain for long. The study provides insight into the wider cultural issue of transfer, although has limited generalisability and was set in a different education system to this study.

The influences of friends and friendships were explored in relation to the adjustment of students between schools in the United States. Berndt, Hawkins and Jiao (1999) note the increase in complexities that students face in terms of social and environmental differences experienced when moving up to a larger school. The influence of friendships is an important factor, as transfer can affect friendship groups developed over time and requires social competence to develop new social alliances in the middle years, which can be a developmentally difficult time.

Ladd (1999) reviewed extant literature in existence surrounding the importance of peer relations and social competence during early and middle childhood. Ladd emphasises, from a range of sources, how complex social and peer relations are at this stage of development. There are few concrete conclusions drawn; however a number of issues are highlighted that have implications for understanding impact of the transfer process for young people. Children who were less accepted by their peers tended to have aggressive or withdrawn profiles, aggression appearing to be the principal cause of peer rejection, and therefore likely to be at risk at transfer to secondary school. Ladd states, there is evidence to suggest that child friendships are an important predictor of children's emotional well-being during early and middle school years.

It could be argued that more complex underlying issues could account for these difficulties, such as special educational needs or complex family situations. Ladd (1999) does not attempt to explore more complex explanations for social problems at this age.

#### 2.4.3 Which groups of young people are most vulnerable

Anderson, Jacobs, Schramm and Slittberger (2000) summarise from an exploration of 16 existing studies dating, from 1989 to 1998, into the impact of contextual factors on students' abilities to negotiate the demands associated with systemic transitions. Anderson et al. (2000) found that girls were more likely than boys to struggle at transfer and note that this may be due to girls coping less well with friendship disruptions, with a contingent negative impact on their self-esteem.

Those who exhibit forms of difficult behaviour prior to transfer were also more likely to find transfer more problematic. Likewise those with low academic performance were more likely to find it more difficult to settle and achieve at secondary school. Anderson et al. (2000) identified a fourth factor, which combines socio-economic status and race groups. Those from minority groups and lower socio-economic status were more at risk. The support of families was important to transfer success and those who had more supportive home environments tended to experience less academic difficulty as they progressed through the transfer process.

Anderson et al. (2000) provide limited detail regarding the evidence base for the conclusions drawn but do offer a useful insight into some of the potential risk factors for some students, and highlight the need for differentiated provisions to accommodate pupils' diverse circumstances and needs at school transfer. They state;

Receiving schools should make every effort to create a sense of community and belonging.. it should be possible to create smaller, more intimate sub-communities of peers and teachers within the school.

p335

Those with greater risk factors are less likely to cope with and quickly move on from the anxiety experienced at transfer and more likely to require the opportunity to access smaller group, supportive opportunities.

Bailey and Baines (2012) used the notion of risk and resiliency factors when investigating pupil adjustment post-transfer. Using questionnaires with 130 pupils pre- and post-transfer and teacher reports at these times, teachers reported important resilience factors to be: feeling supported, being able to control their emotional stability and an increased ability to problem-solve and feeling that they were progressing academically. The highest risk identified was having English as a second language as well as those on free school meals. Bailey and Baines highlight;

It is clear that difficulties controlling emotions during this stressful time would be a hindrance in forming positive relationships. p60

As highlighted in previous research, such as that of Tobbell (2003), relationships are crucial to the feeling of belonging post-transfer. Due to the small number of pupils within the study and the absence of exploration of the effects of demographic variables the effect of such identified risks may have been overestimated in the study.

A longitudinal study by West, Sweeting and Young (2010) noted a diverse impact on longer-term effects of transfer to secondary school. Vulnerable groups, as identified by primary schools, surveyed over time, pre-transfer and up to age 15, through questionnaires and interviews found that individual characteristics were most the most important predictor to future success. Different primary schools attended did not affect this. This study suggests individual factors were central, but transfer is a process set within a complex social and societal setting.

The evidence would suggest that the majority of pupils do succeed post-secondary school transfer, but a small minority do not. Possible risk and protective factors for individual pupils are considered in Section 2.5.

## **2.5 Differences in the coping ability of young people at transfer**

Risk factors identified for children have tended to include poverty, parenting and learning difficulties, whose effects are likely to be compounded at critical times of childhood, such as transfer of school. The work of Rutter from the 1970s onwards, summarised by Schoon (2006), has provided insights into the factors and processes involved in individual variations in response to exposure to risk. Rutter (1997) argues that a number of bio ecological factors can put a young person at risk; these factors can be at an individual level, such as low self-esteem, illness and genetic factors. Factors within the family can pose a risk, including poverty, death and loss and abuse. Wider community factors (including school factors) also pose bio-ecological risk, such as poor academic skills and bullying and in wider context; housing, unemployment and economic difficulties also put some student's at increased risk of academic failure post-transfer.

Newman (2004), investigating and promoting what works in helping to build protective factors to support children's development, states that transition points in children's lives can provide both threats and opportunities. Newman reviewed existing data to identify effective support strategies, which include;

- positive school experiences, academic, sporting or friendship related;
- good and mutually trusting relationships with teachers;
- structured routines, and a perception by the child that praise and sanctions are being administered fairly;
- the development of skills (learning), opportunities for independence and mastery of skills; and

- strong social support networks.

Whilst this research is from a social care perspective, the implications are relevant in education. For adults working with children, such as in schools, it is vital that there is an awareness of risk factors and a role to be played in helping to build adaptive responses to environmental stresses.

Morrison and Redding Allen (2007) note several categories of individual protective factors identified by researchers which include social and academic competence, problem-solving skills, autonomy, and a sense of purpose. Contexts play an important role in the development and enhancement of student coping strategies. Gilligan (1997) states that self-efficacy, an internal sense of worth and competence and development of coping strategies are vital for young people to be able to achieve their potential.

The following table summarises some of the significant risk and resilience themes that have emerged from the research into transfer.

Table 2.4: Risk and protective factors at transfer

Risk Factors	Protective Factors
<p><u>Individual</u></p> <p><u>Youngman (1978)</u> Low ability - worried, disinterested and disenchanted.</p> <p><u>Measor and Woods (1984)</u> Developmental changes at age 11.</p> <p><u>Galton and Wilcocks (1983)</u> High levels of anxiety.</p> <p><u>Galton et al. (1999) DfES report</u> shows a dip in academic attainment.</p> <p><u>DfES Circular 10/99- Learning difficulties/ literacy problems.</u></p>	<p>High ability - academic, contented and capable.</p> <p>'Rite of passage' it should be marked out and celebrated.</p> <p>Anxiety is short-term and decreases quickly.</p> <p>Suggestions made for better communication between schools and teaching approaches. Further research recommended.</p>

<u>Durkin (2000)</u> Feelings of loss and separation.	Development of a transfer booklet to help children explore and cope with their feelings.
<u>Environmental</u>  <u>Nisbett and Entwistle (1969)</u> Attending rural and/or small primary school. Being from a poor background.  <u>Dutch and McCall (1974)</u> Large secondary schools.  <u>Galton et al. (1983) ORACLE study</u> – a decrease in an individualised learning process, more ‘whole class’ teaching.  <u>Chedzroy and Burden (2003)</u> Work expectations lower in secondary school.	Additional visits to secondary schools, cooperation projects which cross over schools.  Attending Transition Department initially in secondary school.  Matching teaching styles between schools closer initially on transfer.  Cooperation and communication between staff.
<u>Social</u>  <u>Galton and Wilcocks (1983)</u> Polarisation of pupil behaviour towards either hard working or not engaging.  <u>Measor and Woods (1984)</u> Lack of support/isolation.  <u>DfES (1999)Truancy / poor attendance.</u>  <u>Tobbell (2003)</u> Peer relationship and communication. Feeling lost.	Sympathetic siblings. Maintaining friendship groups.  Involving parents. Highlight vulnerable children and involve key secondary school staff prior to transfer.  <u>Atkinson (2006)</u> Including peers in support for younger children. Extra-curricular activities.

There is evidence from a range of studies, although a number of studies dated, suggesting that some protective factors have been identified to support vulnerable pupils at transfer. Organisational factors, such as better communication between staff and co-ordinated teaching styles (Galton et al., Chedzroy and Burden, 2003), being academically able (Youngman, 1978), and attending an intermediary transition phase in secondary school, utilising a primary ethos (Dutch and McCall, 1974), would appear to have been beneficial. Perceiving the move to secondary school something to celebrate as a ‘rite of passage’ (Measor and Woods, 1984) and having a supportive network around young people as they transfer has been demonstrated as advantageous (Galton and Willcocks, 1983, Measor and

Woods, 1984, Atkinson, 2006); along with more practical strategies to support vulnerable pupils, such as additional visits and opportunities to explore feelings and anxieties (Nisbett and Entwistle, 1969, Durkin, 2000).

More recently Lyons & Woods (2012) undertook a mixed-methods case study linked to resilience theory, which evaluated the effectiveness of a support intervention group during and after transition to secondary school. Qualitative findings show improvements in children's social-emotional well-being and social skills and highlight the importance of intervention ability to address pupil and parental concerns. Theoretical models of 'support for student resilience' proposed as a result.

High levels of individual pupil anxiety at transfer have also been identified as a risk factor. Lucey and Reay (2000) study children from Year 5 and 6 from two primary schools were asked about their thoughts and feelings around the anticipated move to secondary school in focus group sessions. Parents were also interviewed for selected pupils. Lucey and Reay found that there was a sense of loss evidenced within children's accounts of their thoughts about transfer. Most students demonstrated some levels of anxiety; however, for some this seemed intolerable. Having a friend they knew going to the same school was identified as a protective factor. Also having a 'good teacher' was identified as important, Lucey and Reay (2000) link this to the notion of schools acting in 'loco parentis' and teachers' role in helping children to feel safe in school.

This was a small scale pilot study which did not follow students through into secondary school to be able to see the outcomes in terms of levels of anxiety, once in secondary school; neither does it offer strategies to support those with higher levels of anxiety.

A significant likely change in the move to secondary school is reduced contact that parents have with teaching staff and the school community.

#### 2.5.1 Parental involvement to support transfer

The child's immediate family microsystem is a critical source of support to the developing child (Bronfenbrenner, 2000). The family provides the secure base (Bowlby, 1969) from which a child is able to explore the world safely. Anderson et al. (2000) noted that the active involvement of parents and increased involvement and liaison between teachers at transfer and with support interventions was not widely evident in practice.

Hughes (2008) and colleagues for the Teaching and Learning Research Programme, implemented an intervention known as the 'Home School Knowledge' programme in Bristol and Cardiff. This aimed to help teachers, pupils and parents exchange knowledge about the young people due to transfer.

A range of exchange activities ran in a number of schools to support this sharing of knowledge; these included; videos created by Year 7 youngsters about their life in secondary school to be played to the Year 6 students, discussing parents own experiences of secondary school, and additional parents' evenings organised between Year 6 and Year 7 parents. A further follow-up project incorporated drama activities and follow-up workshops to help allay myths and fears about moving to secondary school.

Measures were taken of participating children's basic literacy and maths skills pre- and post-transfer using standardised tests, in addition to a measure of students' attitudes towards learning.



In schools where the 'Home-School Knowledge' activities had taken place, students showed greater gains in maths progress, although this was not statistically significant. Significant gains were shown in basic literacy skills assessments for those involved in the project. Hughes (2008) provides an example of relatively simple activities and involvement of important adults demonstrating positive differences can be made. Hughes concluded that there is a great deal of knowledge about secondary school transfer but more could be done to utilise this.

The selection of schools involved in this study, and used as comparison, was not explicit. In each city one had a high level of pupils eligible for free school meals and the other a low number, but there is limited detailed information regarding the schools or pupils involved in the study. It would appear the schools volunteered for a specific project, therefore an element of bias is possible in its outcomes and rather rudimentary measurement tools for literacy and numeracy skills were used, although these were consistently applied. There is not an attempt to explain what it was exactly that had made the difference, for example, which activities had been most beneficial or whether it was the involvement of parents that had made the difference.

Other research, into the effects and supportive approaches to transfer, have tended to have a more qualitative approach; using pupil view's to identify key risk and protective factors at this time of change.

## **2.6 What did young people say helped them to cope at transfer**

Measor and Woods (1984) carried out an in-depth ethnographic study of transfer from primary to secondary school focussing on a group of children moving to one secondary school, in response to work carried out by Nisbett and Entwistle (1969). Measor and Woods

aimed to investigate children's individual subjective experiences. Unstructured interviews were used in addition to time spent in schools by the researchers. Students were monitored over the transfer period by teacher assessments and information regarding individual experience through informal interviews over time.

The study investigated the ways in which in a secondary school environment there is an interweaving of the formal (teacher-led) and informal (student led) relationships and aimed to see how children charted their individual course between and within these cultures. It was found that this was a complex challenge for students and at times there were high levels of conflict between the two. For example, those who were academically ambitious and wanted to please teachers were torn between that and friendship groups where academic success was not highly valued.

Measor and Woods (1984) found that there was a high level of status attached to the move of schools, including a focus on student identity in relation to the degree of personal change involved and how these changes are linked with developmental changes of children this age. Measor and Woods found that basic attitudes to school tended to become more embedded, such as conformist-deviant positions becoming more polarised. Socially children seemed to move away from a family-based approach. In conclusion Measor and Woods (1984) refer to the process as being a painful but necessary experience for children. This research was not widened to other schools in order to see if the same trends were evident in other settings.

Also in the mid-1980s Beynon (1985) carried out ethnographic research into the views of staff and students and observations in one lower secondary school and an all boys' comprehensive school on micro, meso and macro levels. Beynon's analysis highlighted teachers' perceptions of students shortly after transfer, noting that teachers tended to classify 'types of children', Students' social background and attitudes were noted, in addition to other

wider factors which related directly to the individual teachers and wider pedagogic and curriculum demands. Pupil factors included societal demands and expectations, family and cultural issues and meeting the demands of teachers. This research draws attention to the salience of 'myths' in relation to the transfer to secondary school and to the needs for coping with change. Myths were found to hold important significance for students and actually provided some meaning to a complex process.

Drawing on interviews with students in their first year in secondary school, Pointon (2000) uses the child's perspective in terms of the differences that they notice and highlight from their experience of primary and then secondary schools. Students generally liked the fact that they got to move rooms in their transfer school, however they did not feel that they had a space that felt like 'their own'. In their primary schools students had their work on display regularly and this made it feel like 'theirs' this was rarely the case in secondary schools.

This study does infer that, from a child's perspective, complex changes in the eco structure in a large part of a child's life, their education, in a short space of time is bound to have an impact, although offers little further regarding how to offer additional support.

Action Research carried out by Durkin (2000) investigated the child's experiences of transfer. The research focussed on schools as organisations and the frameworks that exist within them, with the purpose of highlighting the notion of change and the impact this can have in order to raise awareness of the difficulties that may exist for a number of young people. Links are made to attachment theory and how the process of school transfer may have negative links to earlier separation and loss. A booklet was developed to help children cope with their feelings during this time, although no evidence is provided regarding the effectiveness or impact that use of attachment theory may have in a school to help support with transfer.

Tobbell (2003) carried out an interpretive study of transfer from the child's perspective using a combination of focus groups, and interviews with children. Tobbell took a social constructivist approach with the aim of providing a rich picture of a young person's experience of school transfer to provide meanings of experience and possible clues regarding lack of success for so many in the transfer process.

Themes identified from this data corpus were: 'school as community', which involved the relationships and social interactions which take place; 'adult or child?', the ways in which students felt they were being treated by adults at this time; 'what makes a good teacher'; 'the learning experience'; and 'feeling lost' in the new school environment. Tobbell summarises;

The structure of the secondary school seems to work against the development of effective learning relationship. p13

The direction of influence of this study is important in terms of the shift towards applying Vygotskian socio-cultural learning theory to school transfer and by developing theoretical explanation from qualitative data, rather than the statistical approach based on measurement that informed the explanations in previous research.

Atkinson (2006) used the approach set out by Tobbell in order to follow the process of school transfer from a young person's perspective, collating the views of 12 pupils throughout their experience of transfer. Using semi-structured interviews at the end of Year 6 and at the beginning and end of Year 7 children were given the opportunity to relay their experiences. The aim of the study was to see how future educational practice could be informed and changed as a result of obtaining in-depth experiential data.

Activity theory (Engestrom, 1999) was used by Atkinson (2006) to identify specific tools in the areas of: practical tools, such as information about the new school; curriculum tools, such as development of skills and knowledge of curriculum subjects; and interpersonal tools such as

established friendships. Protective factors identified in this study included: having good friends; having good social skills; being able to do the work in class; and having older siblings to turn to. This small-scale study provides valuable feedback for future good practice in two secondary schools, but may not be applicable elsewhere.

In 2008 Gillison, Standage and Skevington used the notion of quality of life in order to examine whether a change in student perceptions could be seen in the immediate time post-transfer. Gillison et al. used self-determination theory to investigate self-perceived levels of three basic needs; autonomy, competence and relatedness of 63 Year 7 students in one secondary school. Questionnaires were used on three occasions in 10 weeks post transfer. A meaningful improvement over the 10 week period was found for 21% of Year 7 students in the study in terms of autonomy and relatedness but not competence. Results would suggest that supporting pupil's autonomy and sense of relatedness is important to help advance their quality of life over their transfer to secondary school. Quantitative measures of changes experienced by children at transfer are used, where most studies have focussed on qualitative approaches. The study used a relatively small sample of students within one school therefore results have limited generalizability. Gillison et al. note that the challenges posed by a large inner city school may be different from those posed in a smaller school.

West, Sweeting and Young (2010) focussed on the consequences of secondary school transfer on well-being and attainment. This longitudinal study included over 2000 pupils at age 13, 15 and 18/19 in secondary schools used self-completed questionnaires and mini-interviews over time. Most students demonstrated some difficulties but adjusted after the first year. What was apparent was that those of lower ability and lower self-esteem experienced poorer school transitions and this translated on by age 15 to likely levels of depression and lower attainment.

West et al. (2010) highlight the importance of a positive transition experience for future educational success. However, it could be argued that those with lower academic ability and possibly other risk factors in their lives, which are not explored within this study, were contributory factors in the poor transfer experience and therefore these remain later on, it is not as a result of the transfer experience that they later experience difficulties. More general risk factors were identified; such as the role and importance of family; lower ability; low self-image; and low self-esteem. However, data collated reflective experiences from pupils after they had transferred to secondary school which would likely have affected the outcomes.

Protective factors are apparent from this data and the relevance of attachment theory to the transfer process is highlighted but a question that needs to be asked what has specifically been done to improve the process for those most vulnerable. West et al. conclude;

Despite both the importance attributed to the primary-secondary transition  
In UK educational policy and considerable improvements in pastoral  
care arrangements for pupils in transition, the evidence base on transition  
and its consequences remains incomplete. p44

Clearly there is evidence of a range of supportive elements that pupils experiencing transfer are able to identify (Atkinson, 2006), along with their concerns (Durkin, 2000). The changes experienced are not just environmental, organisational and socially (Tobbell, 2003), but there are significant changes in teaching and learning from Year 6 to Year 7.

## **2.7 School and Learning Factors**

In a longitudinal study in New Zealand, Ward (2000) compared students who transferred after differing periods in middle school and found, from pupil and parent perceptions, a change in teaching approach in secondary classrooms. Students picked up on the fact that

secondary school teachers did not know them individually. Compared to pre transfer, students also tended to change the way they explained their progress, increasingly making reference to formal quantitative criteria, such as marks and rankings to calibrate their progress. This was a relatively small-scale study carried out in a different education system which clearly comprises the relevance of these findings in English schools moreover the design of the study is open to criticism in that schools selected were not matched carefully, and there are limited data tracking academic attainment over time. However, despite these limitations Ward's findings are broadly consistent with the ORACLE study, indicating perhaps pervasive cross-school, cross-cultural trends.

Changes in other aspects of classroom practices experienced following secondary school transfer are considerable. Baines, Blatchford and Kutnick (2003), for example, focussed on groupings in classrooms, comparing primary school to secondary school practices in an attempt to explain why educational attainment is not sustained for such a high number of students. Research using systematic description and analysis of classroom grouping practices provided a snapshot view of children's classroom experiences. This study used staff questionnaires regarding groupings and activities within classrooms in nearly 5000 classrooms from a range of primary and secondary school year groups in England.

Baines et al. found that changes in grouping practices from Year 5 to Year 7 were common, and often quite dramatic, with a large increase in whole class interaction with the teacher in secondary school lessons, along with less individual pupil-teacher instructional support. Baines et al. also note that at secondary school there was a much higher expectation for young people to be able to work independently. This study focuses on one particular aspect of a complex situation, and whilst it provides an additional insight into transfer difficulties, taken by itself it clearly cannot provide a comprehensive explanation for the attainment dip for so many students post transfer.

'Myself-As-a-Learner' Scale (MALS) (Burden, 1999) scores were used as an indicator for changes in pupil's academic self-perception between Year 6 and Year 10 by Norgate, Osborne and Warhurst (2013). This study took place in three comprehensive schools, all of which were relatively small. A significant drop was found in scores between Years 6 and 7, and a further small drop between Years 7 and 8, however scores then remained largely stable between Years 7 and 10. Girls scored lower overall than boys. Higher attaining pupils tended to have higher average scores. This study would support the view that pupils with lower academic skills are at increased risk and that there is a dip in most pupils' perceptions in terms of their learning post-transfer. This study also suggests that this, to some extent, continues into secondary school. Norgate et al. note that;

Given the complex relationship that exists between academic self-perception, motivation and attainment, this drop in perception about the ability to do academic work is of concern and adds a further dimension to the information about the difficulties experienced by pupils during transfer to secondary school. p134

However, this study identifies the limitations of using the MALS scale as the predominant measure, given the age range it was standardised on.

Changes in pedagogy and classroom experience for pupils post transfer are part of a more complex process and set of interacting influences, some young people cope better than others. Over time a range of approaches have been taken to try and improve the transfer process for all, and to support the most vulnerable. Evidence of effectiveness were explored to inform this study.



## **2.8 Strategies employed by schools to mitigate the effects of transfer**

Over time there have also been a number of attempts to bridge the gap between the two types of school to lessen the impact of school transfer. Key transfer intervention studies are summarised in Table 2.5.

The range of approaches adopted are discussed in more detail in Section 2.8.1, of particular interest are the studies where small group intervention have been utilised in the first year of secondary school, for example, Dutch and McCall (1974) and Lyons and Woods (2012). Interventions based upon a primary ethos were also considered closely (Bryan and Treanor, 2007 and Lunham, 2009).

### **2.8.1 Whole school approaches**

In 1999 the DfES published guidance to schools on Social Inclusion: Pupil Support. This attempted to address some of the needs of vulnerable groups of students in schools. The guidance notes that there should be an awareness of students who are likely to be at risk of school failure prior to transfer and support should be available throughout the extended transfer period to address the needs of such pupils. Risk factors identified include: learning difficulties, literacy problems, poor attitude/behaviour, truancy and serious home problems. The involvement of parents is highlighted as important in supporting their child through transfer.

Nicholls and Gardner (1999) provide a guide to class teachers regarding children moving between key stages, in particular transfer to secondary school. Three principles are identified and expanded upon: the importance of continuity and progression in teaching and learning; the need for primary and secondary schools to work closely together to deliver this;

and the need to recognise and ease stresses which the children experience over this period of their education. This study provides a practical guide to teachers actually involved in the process based upon the findings of some previous research.

Anderson et al. (2000) studied structures of support in schools in the United States to aid transfer to secondary school. It advocates providing additional information and experiences of shadowing with other students prior to transfer helped students cope better. Student preparedness for transfer and support were seen as key to successful transfer, as was the role of teachers' making themselves more accessible to students in high schools. A limitation of the study is Anderson et al. provide limited detail regarding the specific nature of this support and what worked best.

Table 2.5: Key transfer intervention studies

Study	Type of research	Research aims	Measures used	Main findings	Implications for this study
Dutch & McCall (1974)	Cross sectional quantitative study over time of transfer in one Scottish Authority.	To set up and evaluate a transition department for pupils to attend at transfer.	Tests of attainment, anxiety and attitudes over time in successive years post-transfer.	School size was a factor. Children who attended the transition department were found to be better adjusted in the social and emotional domains, especially for girls and those of average/low ability or from small primary schools. A gradual change in curriculum and teaching style should be adopted. Organisational efforts should be made to familiarise older primary children with the secondary school.	Being in a smaller department post-transfer helped students to better adjust. A gradual pedagogic transition was important.
Sainsbury, Whetton, Mason & Schagen (1998)	Quantitative data collated pre- and post-transfer. Control group used.	To investigate the difference attending a summer school made to reading attainment in comparison to not having this intervention.	National Curriculum levels and age standardised scores.	Scores for both control and comparison group declined significantly between the pre-test and post-test data. No significant difference was found between the summer school and control group.	Dip in reading skills identified. Attending a summer school was not significantly effective to defend against this.
Hodson, Baddeley & Williams (2005)	Interpretive Social constructionist approach Collaborative Action Research carried out with	To identify whether children in Year 7 with SEN had more negative perceptions of school life than those without SEN. A range of interventions	Amended questionnaires from the DfES Index for Inclusion (CSIE 2002) audit materials. Year 7 students, both on and not on the SEN Register and parent	In 3 / 4 Year 7 cohorts the children on the SEN Register had significantly less favourable responses for aspects of school life, especially in social areas and confidence in their ability to do	Locally problem identified into ability of pupils with SEN to cope at transfer. The need for additional

	schools	used to support Year 7s reviewed.	questionnaires. Once strategies had run for the rest of the academic year, questionnaires were used again to measure impact on student, teacher and parent perceptions.	work. Staff responses showed that they would have liked more information regarding SEN.	support in school identified and previous strategies evaluated.
Bryan and Treanor (2007)	ENABLE, Scottish Govt. Third pilot study in Scotland evaluated using quantitative and qualitative data over time.	To support transition for more vulnerable/low achieving students via small group teaching with majority input from primary trained teaches initially at secondary school. To find factors that contributed to smooth implementation. To identify the outcomes of different approaches to improving transition.	Interviews with staff. Focus groups of children. Attainment and attendance records.	Staff thought that pupils' attainment had benefitted as a result of intensive literacy and numeracy lessons with primary teachers. Attainment records showed the projects had a positive impact in academic achievement. ENABLE had a positive impact upon motivation and self-esteem, as seen by continued engagement with school had improved attendance.	A smaller group approach post-transfer is effective in preventing the academic dip in progress and helping student's motivation and self-esteem.

Galton and Morrison (2000) summarise feedback from a survey of schools across England regarding new school initiatives to support transfer in terms of planning and practices that occur in school to support secondary school transfer. In total responses were received from 215 schools. Types of intervention were collated under the following headings: systemic, social and personal, curriculum, pedagogic and managing learning. Table 2.2 summarises the findings:

Table 2.6: Galton Morrison and Pell (2000) findings of survey feedback

<i>Type of initiative</i>	<i>What is being done</i>	<i>% of schools</i>
Administrative	Meetings of Senior staff	50%
	Heads of Year	100%
	Subject Heads	30%
	SENCOs	35%
	Exchanging information & records	100%
	Holding Parent's evenings	100%
Social and Personal	Induction days	100%
	Open evenings	50%
	Parent & pupil guides	70%
	Special ICT, drama. Sports visits	10%
	Identifying problem pupils & offering guidance	2%
Curricular	Teach lessons in feeder schools	20%
	Joint projects	10%
	Summer schools	5%
	Joint training days	2%
Pedagogic	Joint programme of teaching skills	2%
	Employing ex primary head to co-ordinate first term's work	1%
	Teacher exchanges	5%
Managing Learning	Extended induction programmes involving 'becoming a professional learner'	2% (secondary)

Galton & Morrison (2000) p446

What is most telling is how little of the focus appears to be on academic and curricular aspects. However, there is no evaluation of any of the strategies employed only collation of what they were.

Galton and Morrison (2000) conclude that the most important thing for future students to succeed in education, and therefore throughout the transfer process, is to emerge as professional learners. With this in mind, there is a need to create an overall policy and related raft of initiatives to support youngsters in achieving this.

A range of interventions have been put into practice in a number of countries with diverse results reported. Research methods used have ranged from data on student basic skill levels pre- and post-transfer and on attendance and emotional adjustment. It would appear that where vulnerable students have been identified they have benefited from a more primary ethos during their first year of secondary school, although there is limited evidence where matched control groups have been used to provide a clear comparison. More specific targeted interventions to create a more protective environment are also evident in the literature surrounding secondary school transfer.

The Ofsted 2002 guidance evaluating the effectiveness of transfer arrangement provides examples of effective lesson practice in Year 7, much of which would appear to be general good teaching strategies, yet there is no mention of steps taken to prepare pupils for changes in pedagogic style from primary school. The report does, however, promote the benefit of Key Stage 3 teacher training in knowledge of primary teaching practices, Local Authority conferences across Year 6 and 7 staff and transition units for English and Maths for Year 6 and 7.

### 2.8.2 Targeted interventions

A supportive approach to transfer was also trialled in the USA. Feiner and Adan (1993) evaluated the STEP (School Transitional Environmental Project) in which environmental factors were manipulated in a number of high schools better to meet the needs of children during high-risk transitions. Small groups of children, identified as vulnerable by primary teachers, were created with increased levels of adult support. Evaluation showed better emotional adjustment, attainment levels and attendance. Students were identified as being less likely to 'drop-out' in the longer term compared to a random sample of similar students.

Sainsbury et al. (1998) evaluated government led Summer Literacy Schools in Britain. The scheme provided a 'mini school' experience of being taught in the secondary school in a small environment without older students present and aimed to improve literacy skills at the age of 11 over the summer holiday immediately prior to school transfer. The quasi-experimental study used control groups of students in the same schools who had not accessed the intervention and National Curriculum literacy data in May, pre-transfer, and again in September, post-transfer. Results demonstrated no evidence that the summer schools led to an increase in scores as compared to the control groups.

Sainsbury et al. did not attempt to show how the initiative helped the students cope with the move to secondary school more widely and little explanation or possible theoretical perspectives are offered to suggest why this might be.

Bloyce and Frederickson (2012) evaluated the use of a Transfer Support Team (TST) over six weeks of the transfer process. The team consisted of an educational psychologist, specialist teacher group, six teaching assistants and five assistant educational psychologist. The intervention offered circle time sessions, specific curriculum content development and

individual support to students. A comparison group was also studied. Quantitative measures, using Goodman's (1997) SDQ, demonstrated that this relatively brief transition support programme had a positive impact on pupil's targets as vulnerable at transfer, as compared to those who had not received the intervention. Measures of school concern levels over this time demonstrated the importance of providing differentiated support to vulnerable students. It would be useful to understand whether the intervention would be equally as effective in other Local Authorities.

Use of a 'Transition Pyramid Club' to support vulnerable students was evaluated by Lyons and Woods (2012). This targeted small group intervention ran during and after transfer, and supported 9 students. The study used data from class teachers, club members and parents to evaluate its effectiveness. Use of thematic analysis from focus groups, and observation data highlighted the importance of the club's facility in addressing concerns of pupils. Again, the SDQ (Goodman, 1997) was used and, in addition, the Social Competence Inventory (SCI, Rydell et al. 1997). Analysis showed that children's social adjustment was more positive after the Transition Pyramid Club. Whilst the study was conducted in one school, with a small sample, and therefore may have limited generalisability but does suggest that providing a secure base for Year 7 students early on in secondary school is a good use of support. Lyons and Wood note;

A secure base was created by use of a dedicated room..... Getting to know the children, the leader became sensitive to their needs and adept at responding to them.

p20

Section 2.8.2 demonstrates a range of research into interventions to support secondary school transfer and their effectiveness. Some efforts had been made previously in local schools to which this study took place to respond to the need for supporting vulnerable



young people at transfer, but the evaluation of this was not long-term. Section 2.83 explores this in more detail.

### 2.8.3 Previous transfer intervention in the Local Authority in which this study is based

Hodson et al. (2005), Educational Psychologists, were asked by the Education Authority to investigate ways of increasing inclusive practices at secondary school transfer. Four secondary schools across the county took part in the project where questionnaires were given to Year 7 students, teachers and parents towards the end of the academic year. Pupil responses for those on the special educational needs register were compared to other children in the year group in one out of the four schools. Results showed significantly less favourable responses from these children regarding experiences of their first year at secondary school.

Less positive experiences in two of the four schools tended to be reportedly in relation to social situations, one other school identified concerns from students around feeling less well supported in lessons. In the fourth school staff had identified a need for more information regarding SEN students. As a result of analysis of the data a number of interventions were implemented, including lunchtime clubs, training for key staff, peer mentoring and drama workshops. Questionnaires were repeated for this Year 7 cohort, post intervention, and overall there appeared less of a difference noted from the responses from students on the SEN register as compared to other peers. Specific areas previously highlighted as being more negative for SEN students and not targeted by intervention were still seen as less positive experiences. This would suggest the effectiveness of the interventions within the schools.

This was a small scale study in self-selected schools, which would suggest that these schools were already open to new ideas regarding supporting SEN at transfer and therefore were more likely to have positive outcomes. The interventions ran for a short time and limited information is provided regarding detailed evaluation of them, however this does highlight a need within the authority to support its vulnerable students at secondary school transfer. The study does highlight the needs for something different to be done to support more vulnerable students and that relatively small changes can be seen to make a difference.

#### 2.8.4 Primary ethos interventions

A Scottish study from Bryan and Treanor (2007) took the view that an holistic approach to evaluating the impact of transition projects was important. They carried out an 18 month study to improve curriculum transition. Three initiatives were piloted in the 'ENABLE' (Eastbank Network for Academic, Behavioural and Learning Education) Evaluation. Of particular interest is one study that targeted only students identified as likely to be vulnerable at transfer. These young people were taught in separate classes for key subjects with the same members of staff, using an holistic primary-type teaching approach. Interviews with staff and students over time and assessment of academic attainment provided data. Findings demonstrated that academic attainment improved significantly in reading, writing and maths compared to a similar group of students who had not had access to the primary teaching approach. Motivation and self-esteem were also found to be better with the group supported in this way and attendance figures remained consistent across the extended transfer period. Levels of engagement of students appeared better than those of a comparable group from the previous academic year.

A Doctoral study by Lunham (2009) aimed to elicit the views of pupils and other key stakeholders of involvement in a 'primary ethos' approach to initial time in secondary school for vulnerable students. A 'Foundation Group' was set up in Year 7 for low attaining students. Qualitative data was obtained via semi-structured interviews with pupils, staff and the Head teacher. From the data themes of supportive factors were identified, these included; practical experiences prior to transfer for vulnerable pupils; transition programmes involving older students; vulnerable students' access to staff for support; emphasising transfer as an opportunity for a 'fresh start'; supporting the fostering of new friendships; promoting effective liaison between primary and secondary schools; and sharing relevant information on the behavioural system in secondary school with vulnerable students.

Lunham demonstrated that the intervention was perceived as supportive by those involved, however without a control group comparison cannot be made regarding the experiences of similar students without this intervention. The findings were only pertinent to that school and by accessing this group students' may have delayed rather than prevented negative impacts upon transfer.

## **2.9 Summary of the literature into secondary school transfer**

From quantitative data and government led reports over time it is apparent that academic progress is not sustained by a large number of students as they move to secondary school. Qualitative accounts from pupils and those involved also highlight a range of difficulties encountered at transfer, with consistency of findings between many studies. There are complex reasons for this within micro, meso and macro levels of the education system. Despite the complexities most children do well after an initial dip post-transfer. Evidence would suggest that there still exists a small group of vulnerable students who have increased risk of failure at secondary school.

A range of individual characteristics, as highlighted in Section 2.5, that are more likely to make children vulnerable at transfer, is evident in the research base. Nisbett and Entwistle 1969 found that children with special educational needs were most likely to find transfer difficult; this is later reflected by Hodson et al, 2005 and again by Bailey and Baines (2012). Other individual risk factors identified can be seen in Section 2.3 from Youngman's (1978) categorisation of particular vulnerable groups, such as those noted to be 'worried and 'disenchanted'. Qualter et al. (2007) also noted that pupils with less well developed emotional intelligence skills also fared less well at transfer, discussed in Section 2.4.3. Norgate et al. (2013) found that girls generally scored lower on Myself As A Learner Scale ratings over the course of transfer, however gender differences are not consistently apparent across studies into transfer.

Also evident are factors in pupils' microsystemic conditions (Bronfenbrenner, 1995), such as pupils from working classes (Measor and Woods, 1984), which may have compromised the children's development of cognitive capital; and support for development of emotional processing skills. Individual and interactive factors are evident in research into educational success, as identified in Chapter 1, Table 1:1, where boys were identified as being at risk (Epstein and Mac an Ghaill, 2001); as were those young in the academic year (DfE 2010); and looked after children (Brewin and Statham, 2011). These risk factors are likely to be exacerbated by the process of secondary school transfer.

Protective factors, identified in Section 2.5, are also evident in the research base, such as positive friendships (Zeedyk et al., 2003) and family links (Tobbell, 2003). Curricular links across the education phases are identified as important by Bryan and Treanor (2007). Wider, exosystemic, factors also have a role to play in success or failure at transfer, Chedzroy and Burden (2005) note the 'rite of passage' element culturally accepted in the

process of transfer. National policy and guidance play a significant role in school decision making about transfer procedures (Galton et al., 1999).

In summary, it is known that particular groups of pupils are most likely to be vulnerable at transfer and that smooth curricular progression and use of very carefully graduated pedagogic practices in pupils' final year in their primary schools and first months in their secondary schools can afford effective support, reducing risks of failure, frustration and longer term disaffection. A range of strategies has been employed to support the transition process over time, such as 'primary ethos' and 'mini school' approaches (Lunham, 2009), as discussed in Section 2.8.4, with most recently use of a nurture group approach, as evidenced by studies such as that of Pintilei (2009) and Colley (2011). This study aims to add to this research; in helping primary schools to identify those most likely to be vulnerable and use a targeted nurture group intervention post-transfer, to support the process. Implementing nurture group principles, in conjunction with teaching sessions similar to those in a primary setting, and increased opportunities to build relationships with staff and peers in a small class environment. The history of and use of nurture as a support mechanism in schools shall be discussed in Chapter 3.

## CHAPTER 3: NURTURE GROUP SUPPORT FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL TRANSFER

### 3.1 Introduction

#### 3.1.1 Vulnerability at transfer and possible use of a nurture group as a support mechanism

The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 demonstrates a clear need for additional support for some students at transfer. Nurture groups, historically predominantly used in primary schools, provide school-based intervention to meet the needs of pupils experiencing difficulties in coping with the social and emotional expectations of school. Colley (2011) noted that there are in existence approximately 1,000 nurture groups within schools in the United Kingdom, with a trend towards establishing nurture groups in secondary schools, as demonstrated by trends over time in the membership of the Nurture Group Network by secondary schools in the five years from 2005 to 2010, as illustrated in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Nurture groups in secondary schools

Year	Number of Secondary Schools
2005	4
2006	7
2007	27
2008	46
2009	54
2010	68

Colley (2011) p 59

Within this context, research into the effectiveness of nurture groups was important for the development of the current study.

### 3.1.2 Literature search strategy

Through researching literature reporting evidence of effectiveness of nurture group interventions, I aimed to identify gaps in existing research and to clarify my own research questions, research design and methodology. Focus areas for the search included: the range of methods used to collect data regarding nurture groups and the range and breadth of types of nurture group in existence. Historical and recent journal article, previous theses and internet studies were sought. These were then critiqued for their validity, reliability and relevance to my own planned use of a nurture group in a secondary school to support vulnerable students at transfer.

Key initial questions aiming to be addressed were:

- What evidence is there that nurture groups provide an effective support mechanism to children in schools, in promoting improved academic attainment, engagement with school and social and emotional skills?
- What types of children benefit from this approach?
- Would a nurture group approach be an effective intervention in a secondary school to support children post-transfer?

In addressing these questions, previous research into types and the effectiveness of nurture groups was carried out. A more specific focus was then adopted into evidence of nurture groups in secondary schools and ways in which nurture principles have been applied in these settings.

Prior to addressing these questions, brief summary is offered of the theoretical bases for the development of nurture groups, (building upon the introduction presented in Section 2.1.2), with particular reference to attachment theory, which forms the principle theoretical paradigm

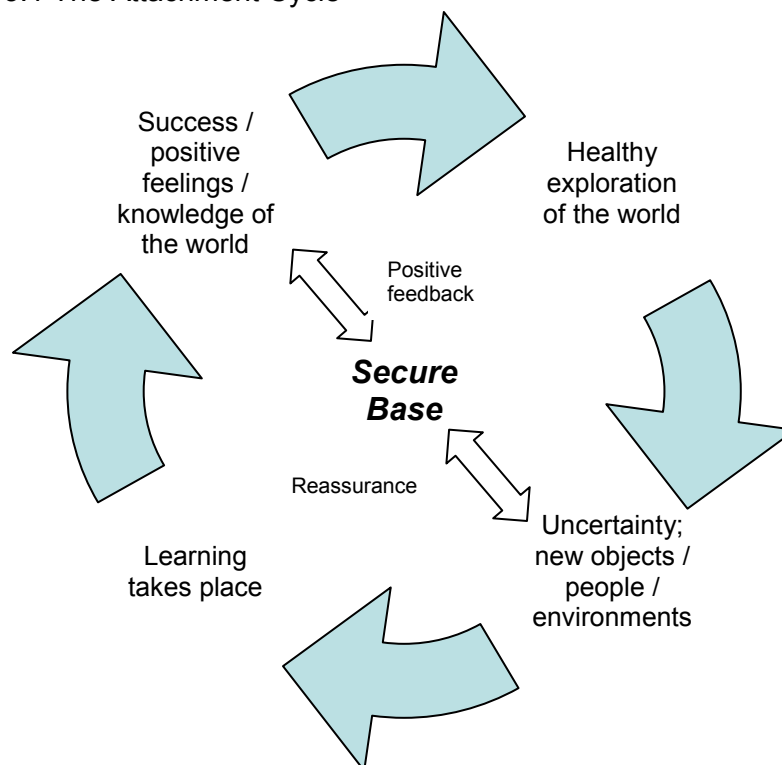
which informed the establishment of the first nurture group by Boxall in 1970 (Bennathan and Boxall 2006), and has continued to be ubiquitously cited and applied in subsequent nurture group interventions.

## 3.2 Attachment Theory

### 3.2.1 Early foundations of Attachment Theory

Attachment theory underpins the work of nurture groups. The work of Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980) marked a major theoretical development into human development and behaviour, using evolutionary biology and ethnology, combined with insight from psychoanalysis (Holmes, 1993). Bowlby theorised that attachment starts in infancy and continues throughout life. According to Bowlby, the attachment behavioural system operates in tandem with the exploratory behaviour of an infant and provides the basis for future relationships.

Figure 3:1 The Attachment Cycle





Experimental work with children and their mothers by Ainsworth and Bell (1970), known as the Strange Situation, comprised observational experiments. Infants were observed in a room with their main caregiver, the introduction of a stranger, the leaving of their caregiver, time alone and then the reintroduction of the caregiver and the stranger. Infant reactions in relation to the amount of infant exploration of the room throughout the phases of the experiment and interactions between the infant and caregiver and the stranger, led Ainsworth and her research team to conclude that there were three main styles of attachment:

- secure attachment,
- anxious-resistant attachment, and
- avoidant-insecure attachment.

The latter two suggest that poor early attachment can predict impairment in later social and emotional development and may be seen in children presenting as having a negative self-image, exaggerating their emotional responses or think of themselves as unacceptable and unworthy. However, other factors should also be considered, for example a child's temperament and individual personality (Zeanah, Berlin and Boris, 2011). Later, a fourth attachment style 'disorganised' was added by Mary Main one of Ainsworth's research team (Main and Solomon, 1990). However, the 20 minute observation time of these experiments have led to criticisms of this research and other variables, such as the participants' mood and cultural differences have also not been accounted for. However, Ainsworth and Bell (1970) remains central as a base for further attachment studies.

### 3.2.2 Attachment beyond infancy

Ainsworth (1989) explores further the range of bonds and attachment that develop across the developmental lifespan, including those with partners, siblings and friendships highlighting the scope for further investigation into the possibilities for expansion of the theory into changing relationships.

Rubin, Dwyer, Kim and Burgess (2004) used an attachment theory framework to investigate friendship and psychosocial functioning in early adolescence. In a study of 828 participants, early adolescent children, questionnaires were used regarding friendships and peer nominated behaviour status. Children's feelings toward parental support, their perceptions of friendships, relationship experiences and self-esteem self-perception were compared. Rubin et al. found that perceived parental support and friendship quality made both independent and interactive contributions in the prediction of adjustment or maladjustment of the young adolescents.

Key findings by Rubin et al. demonstrated that the young people who reported greater parental support regarded themselves as more worthy and socially competent. Peer reports of these young people were less likely to see them as rejected or victimised. Following on from Ainsworth, this would suggest that having an ongoing, secure caregiver relationship benefits social competency. However, Rubin et al. note that using this questionnaire approach may not have given a broad enough picture; more detailed self-report measures of depression, anxiety and withdrawal would have provided more in-depth data.

A further development of attachment theory has been carried out by Crittenden (2005), through the development of the dynamic-maturational model (DMM) of attachment theory. Crittenden highlights the interactive effects of maturation and experience on the organisation of attachment; neurological limitations of infants are not taken into account in the work of Ainsworth and Bell (1970).

Five ideas central to the DMM are:

- patterns of attachment are self-protective strategies;
- self-protective strategies are learned in interaction with protective figures;
- symptoms are functions aspects of dyadic strategy or consequent to it;

- strategies will change when they do not fit the context, and
- therefore, the focus of treatment should be the fit of strategy to context to yield maximum safety and comfort. Crittenden (2005) p171

Crittenden's DMM allows for patterns of attachment to be adaptive in the context in which they are learned and this develops into adulthood. Crittenden explains two periods of maturational shift in attachment; from infancy to pre-school age and then from school-age into adolescence. Crittenden proffers different patterns of attachment as being predictive of different socio-emotional functioning at later ages. Crittenden's DMM strategies in adulthood allow for 12 patterns of attachment in adulthood, this dynamic model based in maturation can better account for the developmental process and wide variation of attachment patterns, not possible in the models based upon infancy studies.

The research and application of attachment theory is ongoing, however, whether attachment theory offers a useful way of understanding human social and individual development is contested. For example, Harris (1998) argues that a child's peers have more influence than their parents and that a 'blame' culture that can be developed with attachment theorising of difficulties is not helpful. Yet counter to this argument Bohlin, Hagekull and Rydell. (2000) carried out a longitudinal study of attachment into middle childhood, and found that children who had shown secure attachment as infants were more socially active, positive and popular at school and reported less anxiety than children had been judged less securely attached during infancy.

### 3.2.3 Attachment Theory in education

Insecure or poor early attachment between the infant and an adult is hypothesised as contributing to explaining a root of difficulties for a number of children in schools. The

attachment theory framework was applied in schools by Geddes (2003, 2005) to provide explanations for patterns of classroom behaviours. From description of experiences working with children in education, Geddes (2003) identified the following profile in the classroom of a child with poor early attachment. This is identified as a 'resistant/ambivalent attachment pattern' by Geddes.

Table 3:2: Manifestation of a resistant/ambivalent attachment pattern in the classroom

Stage of learning situation	Likely Child Response
<u>Stage1</u> : Approach to school / classroom	High levels of anxiety and uncertainty
<u>Stage 2</u> : Response to the teacher	Need to hold on to the attention of the teacher. Apparent dependence on the teacher. Expressed hostility towards the teacher.
<u>Stage 3</u> : Response to the task	Difficulties in attempting task unsupported. Unable to attend to task because of concerns about loss of teacher attention.
<u>Stage 4</u> : Skills and difficulties	Likely to be underachieving. Language may be well developed. Learning may be accompanied by hostility.

Geddes (2003)

Geddes (2003) writes;

My experience is that these children have great difficulty in education because of the fear of independence and autonomy that is implied by learning and indicates growing up.

p240

Geddes (2005) went on to explore further attachment styles, as identified by Ainsworth (1967), and implications for educational practice. Avoidant ambivalent attachment difficulties are described in Table 3.3:

Table 3:3: Learning profile of the avoidant attachment pattern in the classroom

Stage of learning situation	Likely Child Response
<u>Stage1</u> : Approach to school / classroom	Apparent indifference to anxiety in a new situation.
<u>Stage 2</u> : Response to the	Denial of need for support and help from the

teacher	teacher. Sensitivity to the proximity of the teacher.
<u>Stage 3</u> : Response to the task	Need to be autonomous and involved in the task, independent of the teacher. Hostility felt towards the teacher is directed towards the task. The task is the emotional safety barrier between the pupil and the teacher.
<u>Stage 4</u> : Skills and difficulties	Likely to be underachieving. Limited use of language. Limited use of creativity.

Geddes (2005)

Geddes (2003, 2005) aimed to emphasize the importance of understanding the meaning of pupils' behaviour and describes tailored support interventions. If Geddes' assumptions are accepted, implications for the move to secondary school are clear, in light of the contingent expectations for young people to 'grow up' and cope in a very different educational setting. However, the studies merely provide anecdotal accounts of work with particular individuals. There is no reference to how these young people were selected or measures by which the data were obtained.

The difficulties associated with poor early attachments may comprise potential risk factors for some children at times of change. Transfer to secondary school would represent such a time, through the contingent requirement for children to adapt socially; therefore providing a supportive intervention for vulnerable pupils, who may not have had quality infant attachment, at this time could offer protection to aid their coping and ability to succeed in their future education. Nurture groups offer one such intervention, predominantly used in primary schools, but based on the notion of attachment.

### **3.3 The role of nurture groups**

#### **3.3.1 Nurture group origins**

Nurture groups were first established in London in 1970 by Marjorie Boxall, an educational psychologist employed by the Inner London Education Authority in response to the needs of groups of children who were judged to cope very poorly in educational settings. Bennathan and Boxall (1996) developed this provision to address their belief that children who had experienced poor or disrupted attachment relationships with primary carers in their early years needed a more nurturing environment than schools were generally able to provide. They believed that nurture groups could afford a preventative approach in supporting children in the early years of school who demonstrated emotional or behavioural difficulty, which, they argued, resulted from poor early attachment.

Nurture group placement is typically for part of the school day, with the remaining time spent within children's mainstream class. Such groups have been running throughout the country, since the 1970s, with a recent trend towards an increasing number of nurture groups being established in schools.

#### **3.3.2 Classic features of a nurture group**

A 'classic' nurture group is defined as a small discrete class within a mainstream school for part of each school day. There is typically a teacher and teaching assistant working with a maximum of 12 children. At the heart of a 'classic' nurture group intervention are the relationships that are fostered, not only between the adults and the children but also positive relationships modelled between the adults (Bennathan and Boxall, 1996), replicating the supportive, reciprocal interactions between two parents/carers which characterise the 'ideal'

two-parent nuclear family. Attachment theory applications, such as those identified by Zeanah et al (2011), emphasise the importance of positive proximal relationships. Nurture groups were traditionally small group provision in primary schools, usually for children identified as having difficult behaviour, and/or traumatic early experiences (Estyn, 2003).

There is an emphasis on the development of children's language and communication skills through, the kind of mediated learning which characterises the "motherese" of early child-carer interaction, where the carer offers sensitively attuned responses to child-initiated utterances. Key to the success of nurture groups, as described by Cooper and Lovey (1999), is teaching with a focus on early language and basic skill development at the level of the individual child, rather than at expected chronological norms, thus allowing children to have positive recognition and experience of genuine social and academic success in school.

In a similar way, there is a focus on supporting children's social and emotional development and addressing any challenging behavior using the "authoritative" parenting style identified by Baumarind (1967); combining nurture in a climate of acceptance and personal warmth with consistency, predictability and proportionality of response, alongside staff modelling positive behavior and emotional calmness and containment. Cooper and Whitebread (2007) provide the following description:

The nurture group is designed to provide pupils with an educational bridge to permanent and full-time placement in mainstream classrooms. This is achieved by combining features of a caring home environment with formal curricular demands.

p173

The Boxall Profile (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998) was developed as a standardized tool to assist the selection and measurement of progress of those attending nurture groups, and is

often in evidence in nurture group research data. This instrument comprises two sections, with statements rated in relation to Developmental Strands (Section 1) and the Diagnostic Profile (Section 2), providing a rating of a child's cognitive, social, emotional and behavioural needs. The Boxall Profile has also been used as a monitoring tool to aid child-centred planning to address needs and developed to monitor children's progress back in mainstream classes following their re-integration (Doyle, 2001). The Boxall Profile provides a 'range of average scores in a sample of competently functioning children in five age groups from 3 years 4 months to 8 years' (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998). There is also evidence of use with a wider age range as a means of evidencing areas of need and progress, and more recently a version of the Boxall Profile for Young People has been developed (Bennathan, Boxall and Colley, 2010), which has been standardised on secondary-aged pupils. This is reportedly based on research on the behavioural norms of older children, using terminology judged age-appropriate. However, this version was not available during the lifespan of this research.

Tables 3.4 and 3.5 provide a summary of key studies into the effectiveness of nurture groups since they became well established in schools, and the information they provide about the effectiveness of nurture groups. Most of the studies focused on primary school nurture groups. More recently studies into the effectiveness of secondary school nurture groups have begun to emerge, but there is still a limited evidence base for their efficacy.

From these studies it is apparent that in each instance, progress was demonstrated for pupils who attended nurture provision. These studies demonstrate a base for optimism regarding the benefits of nurture groups, both in primary and secondary school settings. However, small samples, lack of controls and poor sampling selection limit the generalisability of these studies.



Table 3:4: Key studies into the application and effectiveness of nurture groups

Study	Type of research	Research aims	Measures used	Main findings	Learning points for this study
Iszatt & Wasilewska (1997)	Long-term evaluation of 4 nurture groups and comparison of 2 similarly identified groups of children in mainstream settings. Interactionist/Social Constructivist approach-relationships are seen as key.	Local Authority EPS evaluation of this Long-term evaluation of 4 nurture groups and comparison of 2 similarly identified groups of children in mainstream settings.	Quantitative and qualitative data. Exclusion and SEN, Code of Practice (2001) level Observations of language use in school. NGs in four primary schools, matched children in two further primary schools who would likely have benefited from nurture group provision. Two additional smaller studies are included looking at the use of children's language in different setting and parental views.	Nurture groups in Enfield seemed to provide a way of preventing statements and most children in them make significant progress in just over one term. Children requiring a statement or specialist provision in control groups was three times greater compared to those in a nurture group	Demonstrates an efficient support intervention for children with SEN.
Cooper & Lovey (1999)	Cooper part of Nurture Group Network Evaluation into the use of nurture groups via delegates at conference, including; Teachers, Head teachers, EPs, nurse-therapist, consultant psychiatrist DFEE	To investigate, using an interpretivist approach. Views of practitioners with specific expertise in relation to nurture groups.	Questionnaire to delegates including 4 key questions asked regarding how nurture group support differs from other support for children with SEN, the types of children who would benefit, what they might gain from the nurture group and how	Mostly positive responses given, a range of children might be selected for nurture group provision, impact on whole school ethos was highlighted.	A positive whole school effect was evident. Nurture groups can support children with a range of needs.

	representative		they think the school is affected by having a nurture group.		
Bennathan & Boxall (2000)	Qualitative study gathering information from Local Authorities regarding what is happening locally with nurture groups. Large-scale study of England and Wales Providing a broad picture of nurture group practices.	To generate detailed knowledge of the distribution of nurture groups, define the nature of nurture groups and develop pilot evaluation techniques to assess effectiveness. Dissemination of information for future development.	Survey questionnaire sent to all Local Authorities in England and Wales, 63 responded.	Range of examples of what claim to be nurture groups found in practice. 4 'types' found; classic nurture groups, variants on the model but still using Boxall underlying principles, groups which claim to be nurture groups but do not fit the model or use the principles, groups which use the name nurture groups but contravene the principles.	Differing models of nurture groups are in existence, not just the 'classic' nurture groups and can be effective interventions.
Colwell & O'Connor (2003)	Review of the effectiveness and rationale of nurture groups via teacher communications.	To compare teacher communications in both normal and nurture group classrooms.	A self-esteem observation framework was adopted to measure changes over time. A classic nurture group and mainstream classroom control group were observed and rated using the scale on 11 behavioural descriptors.	Nurture group teachers used a higher proportion of problem-solving based talk and smaller proportion of deprecatory remarks. They tended to encourage autonomy and initiative rather than control, as compared to with the control group. Inappropriate behaviour was seen to be dealt with more	A calm approach to behaviour was seen as being more likely in a nurture group. Evidence of development of independent learning and coping skills within the nurture group.

				calmly within the nurture group.	
Orr (2006)	Glasgow City Council report to advise on 16 nurture groups.	To evaluate the effectiveness of nurture groups in 16 as compared to 16 control schools.	Goodman's Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), Behavioural Indicators of Self-Esteem (BIOS) and Boxall Profiles used over initial and second pilot study phases.	Data showed statistically significant improvements for nurture group children in comparison to their peers. Nurture group approach seen to be an extremely effective intervention strategy to support additional needs in the areas of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.	A detailed study showing nurture group positive effects compared to those with similar needs who did not have access to this provision.
Cooper & Whitebread (2007)	Large scale study looking at progress over time. Quasi-experimental longitudinal study.	To assess the effectiveness of nurture groups by measuring; pupil improvement, generalisation of improvements to mainstream settings and impact of nurture groups on the whole school.	Comparison groups used Longitudinal data – over 2 years Large sample, 546 pupils across 11 Local Authorities. Quantitative data from Boxall Profiles & Goodman's SDQ.	Overall positive data, particularly in terms of the maintenance of positive effects. Nurture groups do contribute to the development of a 'nurturing school'.	Progress was maintained by pupils and overall positive impact in schools.
Sanders (2007)	Evaluation of the effectiveness of a nurture group pilot in 3 schools, as an inclusive intervention, over 2 terms.	To evaluate the effectiveness of nurture groups as a support intervention in school.	2 study groups and one control group used. Mixed measures included; Boxall Profiles, provision questionnaires, pupil assessment forms,	Significant Boxall Profile data gains, greater than control group. Most children remained in mainstream school. Staff reported improved engagement in	Inclusive strategy which helped improve engagement of children and links with parents.

			staff questionnaires, staff & parents interviews & naturalistic observations.	curriculum and socially outside of the group. Parental contact increased.	
Binnie & Allen (2008)	Evaluation of part-time nurture groups in six schools.	To describe the evaluation of a nurture group intervention across six schools, in one Local Authority, accessed by pupils for four mornings a week rather than each day.	Boxall Profile pre- and post-intervention (over 8 months) Evaluation questionnaires devised to obtain quantitative and qualitative feedback from parents/carers, school staff and head teachers.	Pupil gains evidenced via Boxall Profiles. Positive effect seen in improved behaviour of nurture group pupils both at home and school. The whole school system appeared to have been positively affected, via reported improved school ethos.	Nurture group intervention can still be effective if not done to the full classic model.
Cooke, Parkes & Yeomans (2008)	An account of a nurture group set up for Key Stage 3 students. The young people attended the group for afternoon session throughout Year 7 and then for two sessions per week into Year 8.	Aims to show how nurture group principles have been adapted for older students.	Boxall Profiles over time and an individual case study account is also provide which demonstrated the level of progress that one particular young person made over the time in the nurture group.	Developmental strands of Boxall Profile data demonstrated clear improvements, however diagnostic strands with less consistency. Case study information demonstrated considerable improvement in the students' ability to engage in school life.	Use of nurture group support in secondary school is beneficial to vulnerable students. Can be effective in aiding school engagement and help to improve social and developmental skills.
Reynolds, McKay & Kearney (2009)	Large-scale study of nurture groups across Glasgow to evidence their effectiveness.	To provide evidence of the academic effects of support via a nurture group on five to seven year olds.	Large-scale controlled study involving 32 schools, 16 of which were matched controls. Early Literacy skills	Children attending the nurture group showed significant gains in academic attainments. Boxall Profile & BIOS	Attending a nurture group an support academic attainment skills as well as supporting

			measures, Boxall Profile data, the SDQ and BIOS used pre- and post-intervention.	data showed significant improvements for the nurture group children in comparison to the control groups. SDQ data showed improvement but not at the level of significance.	children emotionally and with their social skills.
Scott & Lee (2009)	An evaluation of a part-time and cross-age nurture groups in a Scottish Local Authority.	To discover if part-time nurture groups provide positive outcomes and whether older children in primary schools benefit from nurture group approaches.	Case-control, nurture group children and control children in mainstream school. 4 schools, each with varying part-time nurture group approach. Pre-, mid- and post-intervention assessment using; Boxall Profile data Standardised Literacy, Numeracy & motor skills assessment, Group teacher diary case study for one child.	Greater gains in Literacy skills. Motor and Numeracy skills also improved in experimental v control group, although not statistically significant. Boxall data – statistically significant gains for younger children, not older Staff feedback positive.	Demonstrates improvements made in a range of developmental areas having attended a nurture group setting as compared to having this intervention.

Longer-term outcomes of nurture groups are limited and there is little evidence regarding the effect of class-size as compared to actual nurture group intervention strategies. In each case of these six key studies there is a tendency for researchers to be advocates of nurture groups or the practitioners responsible for setting up the nurture group provision. These six studies, and a broader range of nurture group research, are discussed in more depth in Section 3.4.

There is a range of nurture groups in England, including use in secondary schools. Findings indicate, but do not conclusively demonstrate that the establishment of a nurture group in a school is associated with a positive school ethos. The direction of influence cannot be confidently ascertained. More detailed discussion of a range of studies into the effectiveness of nurture groups as intervention for children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties is now developed.

### **3.4 Nurture groups in primary schools and evidence of effectiveness in meeting pupils' social, emotional and behavioural Needs**

Cooper and Lovey (1999), working for two universities, intended to survey the views of practitioners with specific expertise in relation to nurture groups. Their survey was implemented at a national meeting regarding nurture groups. 35 delegates were presented with a questionnaire containing four questions:

1. How do nurture groups differ from other support for children with special needs?
2. How would you describe the child who would most benefit from time in a nurture group?
3. What would you expect this child to gain from the group?
4. How do you think the school is affected by having a nurture group?

Cooper and Lovey (1999) p126

Findings demonstrated that nurture groups provided support that was possible at the level of the individual child, which sought to address the child's early nurturing needs alongside the curriculum. Nurture groups were also seen to foster opportunities for developing relationships between staff, pupils and parents. In describing the type of children who would benefit from nurture group provision, respondents tended to refer to developmental factors and the mis-match between the level of development of some children and the demands of school. There was wide consensus amongst respondents regarding nurture groups providing effective provision, which respondents indicated was reflected in a more positive school ethos. Cooper and Lovey (1999) extol the benefits of nurture groups, stating:

Without this experience, some children, unable to cope with the demands of the classroom, suffer constant negative feedback from their teachers and peers and experience on-going problems as they progress through school. p130

However, it must be taken into account that all of the participants who took part in the study were delegates at a conference linked to nurture groups and therefore may have a positive vested interest in their success.

A more detailed, positivist empirical study is reported by Cooper and Whitebread (2007). Here 546 children (359 from nurture groups) were included in a study which analysed nurture group effectiveness in a much more systematic and detailed way. The study lasted for two years and used both Boxall Profiles and Goodman's Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Goodman, 1997) to provide measures of progress over time. Data from the 359 pupils who attended a nurture group were compared with comparison groups of children without access to a nurture group. These children were from five groups, 95 with reported social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and 89 with no reported social, emotional and behavioural difficulties from schools with and without a nurture group provision. Pupils were matched for age, gender and perceived academic ability. In addition, interpretive data were provided using staff and parent reports. Findings demonstrated that the longer established

nurture groups tended to be more effective and the time spent in nurture groups had an impact, with the greatest impact derived from the first two terms.

Cooper and Whitebread (2007) state that:

This study suggests that nurture groups are a highly promising form of provision for young children with a range of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. p171

Compared to the children who had not experienced the nurture group provision, the study showed children with the nurture group experience achieved greater improvement in terms of Boxall Profile scores and on the SDQ measures.

It would be useful to have longitudinal follow-up data showing whether or not children remained in mainstream education beyond the two year study and how they progressed both socially and academically. The researchers in this study are not neutral parties, but nurture group advocates, seeking evidence of efficacy and cost-effectiveness in order to convince prospective commissioners and funders, and have a vested interest in showing how effective nurture groups are and how they are able to provide value for money support to the Local Authority in which they are employed.

The dynamic relationship between the adult and child posited by attachment theory (Bowlby, 2003), was the basis of a study by Iszatt and Wasilewska (1997), educational psychologists in Enfield. Comparison of school SEN data over time for those who had experienced nurture group support and those who had not, demonstrated that nurture groups did provide a successful preventative approach, Data on 308 children from six nurture groups showed that in less than one year 87% of the children who attended nurture groups were able to return to mainstream classes. Follow-up several years later demonstrated that 83% of the original sample children were still in mainstream school, with only 4% needing additional provision.



From the control group, of 20 children identified as having similar needs, 45% were receiving additional support. Pen portraits of a number of children within the study are provided from teacher accounts. Ofsted feedback on schools that had been inspected with nurture groups within the evaluation time frame, where two of the schools with nurture groups both received favourable reports with regard to the groups.

This study provides evidence for the effectiveness of nurture groups as a support mechanism for vulnerable children. However, data are, in large part subjective, in that it is the judgement of individual staff within schools which is used to define the support required for children. Iszatt and Wasilewska (1997) conclude that the nurture group was an efficient and effective use of Local Authority resources and was also found to be an effective means for increased work with parents. Information regarding how and why this improved parental partnership might have occurred is, however, limited.

Cooper and Tiknaz (2005) took a more in-depth look at nurture groups in an attempt to establish their affective dynamics and key variables, using both quantitative and qualitative data alongside findings from previous studies of nurture groups. The study took place over three years across three schools, two infant and one primary, in a city in the Midlands. Along with Goodman Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997) and Boxall Profile (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998) data, there was an in-depth focus on qualitative explanations of the effectiveness of nurture groups. Nine nurture group staff, nine mainstream teachers and three head teachers were interviewed throughout the study using semi-structured interviews. In this way the study provides rich data regarding what makes nurture groups effective from an insider's perspective. According to Cooper and Tiknaz, success factors included:

- School-related factors, such as staffing stability and the general quality of teaching across the school;

- class composition and structure, ensuring a balance of children's needs within the group to enable all children to benefit from the experience;
- child-related factors, such as attainment levels and fluency of English prior to joining the group; and
- organisational factors: for example, how long the nurture group had been established and the time that children have access to the nurture group.

Also identified as important was the way in which staff conceptualised progress made by the children. Benefits to the whole school were noted in this study, and, in turn, key to the success the communication between nurture group and mainstream staff was considered critical to the success of a nurture group.

Cooper and Tiknaz's (2005) longitudinal study over three years provides clear strategic pointers and highlights the need for an awareness of what can make a nurture group work well. However, findings from the three case studies cannot be generalised to all nurture groups. Boxall Profiles and Goodman's SDQ were used as quantitative measures within the study, yet the outcomes are only reported via accounts of interviews with key staff. Evidence is not demonstrated regarding the quantitative findings and how these fit with the qualitative data.

Sanders (2007) in a more recent in-depth study of the effectiveness of nurture groups looked in detail at three pilot groups, again using Boxall Profile (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998) data along with interviews and questionnaires for staff, students and parents. The Boxall Profile was completed at the beginning and end of the academic year for 17 attending the nurture group over three terms, in a pilot study in an infant school. The Boxall Profile was also completed at the beginning and end of an academic year for nine Reception and Year 1 children in a comparison primary school without a nurture group.

Findings showed that most children who had spent time in a nurture group were able to remain in mainstream schools. These were children reported to be not fully accessing the curriculum and, in some cases, at risk of exclusion. Teachers reported, in interviews, that these children had made greater academic progress than those in a control group over the same period and were perceived to be more accepting of adult requests and able to concentrate better on learning tasks.

Boxall Profile data demonstrated that nurture group children were more able to manage their anger and emotions better post-intervention. Staff noted that there appeared to be a calmer atmosphere in the school in general after a time of having a nurture group. Parents were said to have improved links and contact with the schools and to have noticed an increase in their children's confidence. Quantitative measures across the three schools demonstrated that children who had attended the nurture group made significant gains in social and emotional skills, which were recognised by the children themselves and their parents.

Sanders (2007) used a range of qualitative and quantitative measures in three differing schools which combined to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the groups. However, criteria used for selection of sample of children in the study were not made explicit, nor is it clear how control groups were matched. The controls had higher entry scores, therefore the validity of the comparison in the study was limited. The aim of the research was to provide evidence of the effectiveness of nurture groups within the local authority in which Sanders was employed. As was the case with the Cooper and Tiknaz (2005) study, Sander's insider status and commitment toward nurture group may have influenced the structure and design of the study, compromising reliability of its findings.

In Glasgow, Gerrard (2005) also reviewed a nurture group pilot scheme from his/her perspective as an employee of the educational psychology service. A study of two nurture groups was carried out, using matched control groups for comparison. Gerrard provides evidence for improved behaviour and emotional and social skills for most of the children who attended the nurture groups, as shown by Boxall Profile data. In the control schools there was little change noted for the children studied. Interestingly Gerrard notes that changes appeared to happen quite quickly, becoming more swiftly apparent than over the 18 months in a nurture group suggested by much of the then extant literature.

Gerrard (2005) does not provide an in-depth evaluation, merely an overview of findings. While again, affirming the value of nurture groups, the study provides limited information regarding why, where and how the groups were selected and set up. There is limited evidence of how the control groups were matched or of the support that these children were given. What is useful from this pilot study is the suggestion of the relatively short time it takes to see changes, although whether or not improvements were sustained is not evident. This ties in with findings of Cooper et al. (2001) who had reported that it took two terms for the benefits of nurture group attendance to be evident, and the observations of Iszatt and Wasilewski (2007), who also suggested progress could be seen early on in the intervention.

Colwell and O'Connor (2003), the former a University lecturer, the latter a teacher in a school in Enfield, studied the longer-term effects of nurture groups in a positivist experimental study, aiming to test for statistically significant improvement on Boxall Profile (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998) data after exit from the nurture group back into the mainstream classroom. From an initial group of 68 children who had attended a nurture group in five schools, data were followed up for only 12 of these children. Significant improvement was seen to have been sustained for this group in 10 of the Boxall sub-strands. Colwell and O'Connor (2003) suggest that long-term significant improvement can be evidenced for children who have been

supported via a nurture group after reintegration, in their development profiles, although not in all areas assessed.

They suggest a need for a whole-school nurturing approach in order better to support generalisation of the work of nurture groups, concluding:

Evidence supports conceptual explanations of the effectiveness of nurture groups and we propose that mainstream schools could become more inclusive if whole-school nurturing approaches were adopted.

p119

There was no control group to provide comparison of progress or to separate nurture groups effects from time effects; however, the study highlights the need for further data regarding the effectiveness of nurture group for children beyond their support in the group. Colwell and O'Connor (2003) were easily able to provide evidence suggesting the short-term effectiveness of nurture group provision, and comment that they clearly facilitate 'developmental catch-up'; however, whether this is sustained is not fully evident due to the limited number of children in the follow-up.

A more recent large scale controlled study into the effectiveness of nurture groups was carried out by Reynolds et al. (2009). This took place across 32 schools in Glasgow, 16 with nurture groups and 16 control schools, and again used Boxall Profile Data alongside basic literacy scores, the Goodman's Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires and observational schedules before and after the period of nurture group attendance. The study, in addition, used the Behavioural Index of Self-Esteem (BIOS) and literacy skills measures. 221 primary-aged pupils accessing a nurture group, demonstrated overall positive effects of the nurture group approach. Children who attended the nurture groups showed significant gains in academic attainment measures, greater than those of the control group. Boxall Profile

data, SDQ and observations also showed improvements, although not all at a level of statistical significance. Reynolds et al. (2009) suggest that:

This is the first study to report quantitative gains in academic achievement when the progress of pupils in nurture groups is compared with that of matched children in the mainstream classroom.

p204

Reynolds et al.'s (2009) study has methodological limitations, however: it was the influence from schools as to whether to set up a nurture group, it was not possible to conduct random control trials, absenteeism affected overall results and other potentially confounding variables such as educational and teaching factors were not taken account of across the schools. It could also be argued that using a positivist approach to evidence children's emotional and behavioural development is in itself inappropriate in light of the fundamental subjectivity of the phenomenon. Reynolds et al. note the need for further investigation into nurture groups, in order more fully to capture the range of models in operation, the different effects of which not accounted for within this study.

A range of practices of nurture groups has continued to develop within schools, including in secondary school. The most recent research reflects this, as summarised in Table 3.5.

The breadth of research into nurture groups has widened in recent years, and now includes investigations into their effectiveness as a supportive intervention within secondary school settings, and how nurture groups can promote links with parents to provide consistency of approach across settings, within the child's closest relationships, within school and family and family microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1995).

Table 3.5: Most recent studies into the effectiveness of nurture groups

Study	Type of research	Research aims	Measures used	Main findings	Learning points for this study
Pintilei (2009)	Thesis providing an exploratory study using qualitative data.	To explore secondary aged pupils' experiences and views of secondary school nurture group.	Grounded theory used in one secondary school nurture group. 8 young people interviewed and group observations carried out.	Pupils valued their time in the nurture group, in particular the opportunity to build relationships with staff and pupils there. The nurture group provided a 'safe base' and range of activities and opportunities for facilitate communication.	Focused nurture group provision provides opportunities to develop relationships with staff and peers, which are important for engagement school.
Colley (2011)	Thesis on the development of nurture groups in secondary schools.	To investigate the practical effects of a secondary school nurture group and what the impact of a nurture group is in secondary school. To investigate what modifications are necessary to enhance the reliability and validity of the Boxall Profile at secondary age.	Semi-structured interviews with professionals, students and parents. Survey of professionals to rephrase the Boxall Profile for secondary school age group.	The nurture group was seen to offer a 'safe base' and enhanced the continuum of support to students and was a structured and organised intervention, but had its weaknesses. Positive impact had been seen on student's individual progress, attendance and enjoyment of school.	Evidence of effective use of intervention in secondary school, suing a nurture group approach. Impact upon enjoyment, engagement and attendance at school was evidenced.
Davies (2011)	Thesis providing an exploration of evidenced-based practice in nurture groups using realistic evaluation.	To explore the factors affecting practice in nurture groups and suggests future training directions.	10 individual interviews, group realist interview & realist synthesis.	Practitioner's perspectives on key mechanisms and contexts influencing practice and enabling positive outcomes for children attending nurture groups and their families identified. Training should include greater peer supervision	Provides suggested ways forward in building upon existing practices.

				and opportunities for learning.	
Ofsted (2011)	Review of nurture groups as a support mechanism in schools.	To analyse the elements of successful nurture group provision and the difference nurture groups make to pupil outcomes.	Over a 4 months period inspectors visited 29 schools with nurture groups. Inspectors met with teachers and parents and schools academic progress records scrutinised.	Nurture groups that worked well were seen to have made a considerable difference to the behaviour and social skills of pupils attending. Nurture groups gave parents practical support. Literacy and numeracy progress was varied.	A range of schools showed nurture groups to be seen as effective provision, also evidenced a supportive approach for parents.
Taylor & Gulliford (2011)	An exploratory study using grounded theory.	To explore the relationship between nurture group working and children's behaviour as perceived by adults.	Qualitative methods based in grounded theory. 26 semi-structured interviews with teacher, teaching assistants working with nurture groups and parents in 9 schools.	Nurture groups were seen to have the unique potential to bridge home and school and for increased engagement with parents.	Nurture groups can improve links with parents, important for vulnerable children.



In 2011 Ofsted published the results of a survey of the use of nurture groups and related provision in a sample of 29 primary schools. 95 parents were interviewed, and for 50 pupils who were still attending the groups, and another 46 who had previously attended a nurture group, the school's pupil progress tracking information was reviewed by inspectors. The pupils' work was also looked at by inspectors and the evidence discussed with senior staff within the schools. Where possible the pupils were observed within the nurture group setting.

The report states that of the 50 case study pupils attending nurture groups at the time of the survey;

- Nineteen pupils were seen to be making substantial progress with their behavioural, social and emotional skills.
  - Twenty-four pupils were at least making some progress with their behavioural, social and emotional skills.
  - Five pupils were making very little progress with their behavioural, social and emotional skills.
  - For two pupils the school did not have enough evidence for inspectors to make a judgement.
- Ofsted (2011) p31

In terms of academic progress, as reported by staff, and from National Curriculum levels, the evidence was not as strong; only nine pupils demonstrated progress in reading, writing and mathematics since joining a nurture group. Others had started to make some progress, but this remained limited.

This was not a thorough study of measured progress: findings were based upon anecdotal evidence from school staff and parents. The measures used were teacher-judged National curriculum levels rather than standardised assessment tools. No comparison schools were

used to validate the findings. Parental feedback was positive; moreover, schools were noted to be generally nurturing in their approach.

The wider positive effects of nurture groups are highlighted in a number of studies, such as that of Cooper and Lovey (1999), although it is likely that schools which are supportive of a range of needs generally are more likely to instigate the establishment of a nurture group: hence, directions of causality cannot be established. There has been some attempt to measure whole school effects of a nurture group and the effects they can have on a school's ethos.

### **3.5 The wider effects of a nurture group within a school**

#### **3.5.1 Changes in school ethos**

Doyle (2004) set up the first nurture group in Thetford and studied the effects of having a nurture group on the wider school, as was also highlighted by Sanders (2003), who noted that staff reported a generally calmer atmosphere in school. Doyle outlines a qualitative study which, using a social constructivist perspective, drew upon the narratives of one primary school regarding changes noted since the establishment of a nurture group. Contextually, there were reportedly a number of difficulties across the school, both academically and in children's behaviour, within this the use of a consistent and therapeutic approach for a small number of children in the nurture group was deemed successful, and the wider implications highlighted. Doyle reports that, over time, the school as a whole began to adopt the principles of nurture and there was an increased understanding of the importance of meeting children's attachment needs. Doyle (2003) writes that there was:

An alteration in thought processes, with the whole staff team  
bringing the nurturing processes to the fore in their planning as

awareness of the principles and practices in nurture group working increased. There is also an increase in the dialogue undertaken when addressing social, emotional and behavioural needs within mainstream classrooms as skills improved in supporting this vulnerable group of children.

p29

Binnie and Allen (2008) investigated the impact of nurture group interventions in six schools. Quantitative measure of progress using Boxall Profiles and also a measure of behavioural indicators of self-esteem, and qualitative evaluation questionnaires with staff and parents were used to evaluate impact of the intervention for individuals, which were positive overall. In addition, questionnaires ascertained wider perspective on the perceived impact of the nurture group on the schools. Staff reported a number of whole school benefits, and head teachers thought that the intervention had allowed their school to become more proactive in supporting children with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. The approach, and the contingently enhanced involvement of families, was considered to have been of benefit to the schools, on the whole. The study does not, however, identify the specific ways in which the nurture group was deemed to have been beneficial to schools, or the mechanisms which had contributed to these positive effects.

An investigation by Davies (2011) aimed to discover factors which characterised schools with a nurture group, at the levels of community, family, whole school, and in mainstream classrooms, as well as the outcomes for children who attended the nurture groups. Using Realistic Evaluation (Pawson and Tilley, 1997), Davies evaluated primary school nurture groups in seven schools, using interviews with nurture group staff and head teachers. Children attending nurture groups were also interviewed in groups. Findings demonstrated that for nurture groups to be most effective they need to operate in supportive and inclusive schools with all staff working collaboratively. Relationships between staff were considered

important in enabling a 'nurturing' school ethos to develop. Davies argues that all staff required ongoing training and support to be able to engage effectively in collaborative working, which did not otherwise arise as an 'automatic' incidental benefit of having a nurture group on site.

### 3.5.2 Wider application of nurture group principles in schools

The classic nurture group model, as noted previously, is often professed to be the most effective, particularly by the founders of nurture group methodology, Bennathan and Boxall (2002). The key "ingredients" of nurture groups, as noted in Section 3.3.2, are: a small number of carefully selected students; a teacher and teaching assistant working with the group on a daily basis; and close links to mainstream classes. However, this is a costly provision which many schools are unable to resource or implement fully. In recent years there has been an increasing number of the traditional nurture groups, but also the use of 'nurture' principles has been adopted more widely in schools to support a wider range of students and in differing ways.

Scott and Lee (2009) investigated the impact of the use of nurture group principles, accessed by children less frequently than every day, and/or with children of different age groups. Again, Boxall Profiles were used to measure progress, in addition to pre- and post-intervention assessment of literacy, numeracy and motor skill development. Against control pupils, the children who had received nurture support made greater gains in all areas assessed over the intervention period of one academic year, although not at a statistically significant level. Interestingly findings showed that in terms of age, the younger the child the greater the gains. Additional information was gained regarding the number of problematic incidents recorded on the playground, while accounts of staff perceptions of children's

behaviour were obtained over the time of nurturing strategies, all of which demonstrated improvement.

This is a wide-ranging study appearing to try to find evidence of impact across a range of developmental variables which, while demonstrating a range of benefits, could not differentially determine which of the 'nurture' mechanisms and in which combination were most potent in enhancing pupil progress, for children of which age group and/or with which presenting difficulties. Scott and Lee (2006) provide limited information regarding specific nurture group activities that pupils were able to access, merely noting the Nurture Group Network general principles for explanation.

Applying nurturing approaches in a wider school context, King and Chantler (2002) studied the effects of a 'quiet room'. This project provided support for a range of students whereby they could access a nurturing environment, adapted from a 'classic' nurture group, which afforded a quiet space for pupils when needed, but not a consistent intervention, to help them to deal with difficult issues. Usually children experienced the 'quiet room' once a week, albeit in some cases, more often. Questionnaires given to staff and students showed that the 'quiet room' was perceived as an effective way of meeting children's emotional, social and behavioural needs. Initially Boxall Profiles were used to identify need and monitor progress. However, it was judged that this was a too time-consuming and in-depth mechanism to be feasible for the number of children, so alternative measures were developed (in the form of the staff and student questionnaires summarised above).

King and Chantler claim benefits of this application of nurture group principles in a broader format as a support intervention, despite their small-scale study providing limited data. It must be noted though that both researchers work within the school.

### 3.5.3 Increased involvement of parents

Cooper and Tiknaz (2007) highlight a nurture group environment as an opportunity for less formal discussions with parents and carers, stating that:

Parental involvement is extremely important to the success  
of the nurture group provision.

p138

The Ofsted (2011) survey reported that a strength of nurture groups was the relationship with parents/carers provided.

Using grounded theory, Taylor and Gulliford (2011), gathered data surrounding the home-school links developed for those attending a primary school nurture group in nine schools in two local authorities within the Midlands. Interviews with staff and parents were used to gather data in relation to changes in children's behaviour in school and at home. Taylor and Gulliford explored the following core themes:

- perceived difficulties experienced by children prior to attending nurture groups and factors considered to underpin those difficulties;
- perceived impact of children's difficulties in their home and school environment and relationships with parents, teachers and peers;
- perceived effect of nurture groups experience on children's' social and emotional behaviour and educational progress; and
- processes or factors relating to the nurture group environment perceived to contribute to successful intervention.

p75

Taylor and Gulliford provide detailed accounts of the reported experiences of parents and nurture group staff in relation to these themes. What emerged from the data was that nurture group contexts offered the potential for facilitation of improved home-school dialogue and home-school engagement and parental participation. Bronfenbrenner (1979) highlights the importance of systems around a child in influencing the child's subsequent development; the mesosystemic relationship between home and school constitutes important interrelations

between two significant systems for young people: Taylor and Gulliford (2011) highlight the potential of nurture groups to address the needs of the child from an holistic standpoint.

What became apparent from Taylor and Gulliford's (2011) data were the powerful emotional experiences of parents regarding their children having difficulties in school; parents felt better supported when their child was in the nurture group, prior to which they had highlighted feelings of inadequacy and helplessness. Whilst this study does not show that nurture groups provide an optimal mechanism through which to enhance parental involvement and/or self-efficacy, it provides a useful perspective on the potentially positive outcome of nurture group provision in strengthening this aspect of parental support and engagement. Findings cannot preclude the chance that other methods of engaging parents more fully in their children's schooling could have achieved similar or improved outcomes.

The importance of involving parents is highlighted by family systems theory (Dowling and Osborne, 2003). The interactive process between and with those working with children is vital in supporting their successful development, as also endorsed by attachment theory (Bowlby, 1965, 1973, 1980). Enhancing opportunities for secure attachment to their parents/carers and school staff for vulnerable pupils is also likely to be important at secondary school transfer. The following discussion provides evidence of the move to use of nurture groups as a support mechanism within secondary school settings.

### **3.6 The application of nurture principles in a secondary school**

Cooke, Yeomans and Parkes (2008), representing their employing Local Authority, a school and a university, produce an account of a nurture group established for Key Stage 3 students, aiming to show how nurture group principles were adapted for older students. The premise of this study was instigated in the high school, following whole staff training on

nurture, and expressed concerns regarding one particular student's behavioural difficulties. Cooke et al. highlight the role that nurture groups can play in providing support for children with social emotional and behavioural difficulties by using nurture group approaches in a secondary school setting. These include:

- maintaining consistent staffing (usually a teacher and classroom assistant);
- modelling of positive behaviour and social skills by staff;
- providing predictable routines;
- limiting the size of the group;
- providing developmentally appropriate activities;
- providing a secure base; and
- considering the importance of transitions in children's lives

p293

Cooke et al. (2008) highlight that the transition into adolescence requires separation from early attachment figures, for example family, vulnerable young people may experience infantile feelings during adolescence. A nurture group approach within secondary school could provide a means of supportive intervention for those likely to be vulnerable in Year 7, at this time of development and also coping with change of school.

In the study young people were identified for the group by Year 6 teachers being asked to complete Boxall Profiles. These were used as a selection instrument on the basis of need and the group dynamics. The young people attended the secondary nurture group for all afternoon sessions throughout Year 7 and then for two sessions per week in Year 8. The sessions were based on the 'classic' nurture group model, following whole staff training about nurture and then additional specific nurture group training for all of the SEN Department staff.

Methodological approaches, including the selection of pupils, use of Boxall Profile data and case study, by Cooke et al. were used as a basis for this study. In addition, wider secondary



school research by Colley (2010), as within this study, provides broader qualitative evidence regarding the effectiveness of a nurture group approach to support vulnerable secondary school pupils.

Evaluation data were obtained by further termly Boxall Profile assessment by secondary school staff, which demonstrated improvements on all of the developmental strands; however, diagnostic strands showed less consistency on four of the sub-strands progress was not evident. Case study information for a single pupil, who joined the group at the end of the autumn term in Year 7, demonstrated considerable improvement in the students' ability to engage in school life; however, how/why this student was selected is not explained.

Colley (2011) meanwhile, investigated the development of nurture groups in secondary schools using semi-structured interviews with professionals involved in secondary school nurture groups across Britain, identified from the Nurture Group Network data base. Six secondary schools' nurture group staff were interviewed in depth to elicit stakeholders' perceptions of practical effects of having a nurture group. Student and parental interviews also took place to explore their perceptions of nurture group provision; the nurture group as a 'safe base'; student outcomes; and possible stigma associated with nurture provision. Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was used.

Findings demonstrated that those involved were able to describe positive progress made by individuals during and following the intervention, with several stakeholders alluding to long-term positive outcomes for students. Parental responses demonstrated that a number of parents thought that their child would have been less engaged in school without the provision. The study does not however provide data on students' academic attainment in school or outline in any detail the criteria or methods of initial selection of students for the groups, or procedural aspects of the secondary school nurture groups. Overall therefore,

whilst providing a useful insight into experiences of secondary school nurture groups the study does not provide detailed or convincing evidence of its effectiveness.

Pintilei (2009) carried out an in-depth examination of young people's experiences of a secondary school nurture group. Using grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006, Strauss and Corbin, 1990), the study aimed to gain knowledge of the experience and views of young people who had experienced this support intervention. The study took place in one secondary school, whose nurture group ran for three sessions per week throughout Year 7.

Pintilei collated data from observations of three nurture group sessions and interviews with eight young people. The interviews aimed to provide pupils with the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences in the nurture group. In addition, interviews took place with the nurture group leader and co-ordinator. Analysis of interviews showed that young people who had experienced the nurture groups valued building and experiencing nurturing relationships with staff and peer most strongly, and also valued having a 'safe base'; and experiencing a range of activities. The nurture group experience was also judged by both respondent groups (staff and pupils), to have facilitated communication; the nurture group staff showed that they facilitated opportunities for informal communication with the young people, which in turn supported the young people in communicating more readily with others.

This research provides a valuable insight into young people's views of attending a nurture group in secondary school. It does not however provide information regarding the progress of these students over time or their ability to engage in wider school life, in particular with learning.

### **3.7 Summary of research into nurture groups and implications for the current study**

Research into nurture groups since the 1990s has consistently shown this intervention to be beneficial in supporting pupils who are judged to be at risk of exclusion, and social and emotional difficulties. Most studies use the Boxall Profile and academic attainment scores to evidence pupil progress over the time of the intervention, such as the research of Bennathan and Boxall (1998) and Cooper and Whitebread (2007). Qualitative data, such as that of Cooper and Tiknaz (2005) and Doyle (2004), have also indicated nurture group benefits in terms of adult perceptions of individual children's development and also wider school benefits.

More recently the use of nurture groups as a supportive targeted intervention in secondary schools can be evidenced (Pintilei, 2009; Colley, 2011) with quantitative and qualitative data suggesting positive effects on students and the culture of the host school. There appears to be limited longitudinal data in existence to show whether these benefits are sustained as children progress through their education, with the level of support normally greatly reduced.

At a time of rapid change within the lifespan development process, the many simultaneous changes in their school environment, peer group, social role within their new school, curriculum, pedagogic practices and much more, secondary school transfer poses a significant risk to continuity of progress for many pupils, and particularly those characterised by greater social, emotional and behavioural needs.

Use of a nurture group approach to support vulnerable pupils at secondary school transfer forms the focus of this study, which sets out to apply what is already known about the effectiveness of nurture groups and their use within secondary schools.

This intervention whose evaluation forms the primary focus of the current study uses a nurture group approach, within which 'classic' nurture principles are applied with the aim of supporting children identified as likely to be at risk. This was a time-limited intervention in which resource constraints within the focus school confined the targeted intervention to Year 7: children would be educated in mainstream classes in Year 8.

## **CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Taking account of the remit, design and findings of previous research into both secondary school transfer and nurture group interventions, this chapter presents the methods used for the current research study, the rationale for the approaches used, and the implementation of these in answering the research questions.

### **4.2 Rationale for research methodology used within this study**

#### **4.2.1 Research paradigm and researcher position**

This study takes a social constructivist perspective and utilises a mixed methods approach (Fielding and Fielding, 1986; McCracken, 1988; Seale, 1999) based within both positivist and interpretivist paradigms. Scott and Usher (1999) state that the use of the natural sciences empirical method presumes that the world can be represented symbolically, from which facts can be derived. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), meanwhile, argue that, within social science, use of an interpretive stance allows for fuller understanding of the subjective worlds of human experience. Social phenomena are not objective. Using elements from both positivist and interpretive paradigms in this study aims to provide a thorough evaluation. The rational being to replicate, and allow comparison to, previous studies into transfer (Galton and Wilcocks, 1983; Galton et al., 1999; Tobbell, 2003; Atkinson, 2006; Lyons and Woods, 2012; Norgate, 2013) and nurture group interventions (Iszatt and Wasilewska, 1997, Cooper and Lovey, 1999, Bennathan and Boxall, 2000; Cooper and Whitebread, 2007; Cooke et al., 2008; Pintilei, 2009; and Colley, 2011) which utilise both methodological approaches. Use of

a mixed-methods approach also allowed for data to meet the needs of school requirements, in addition to providing broader evidence of the nurture group intervention.

Positivist approaches aims to provide data to address the research questions;

- *What impact does being in a Year 7 nurture group have on young people's social and emotional skill development?*
- *What impact does participation in the nurture group have on the young people's academic performance?*

Whereas interpretivist data within this study predominantly aims to address the questions;

- *Has being in a nurture group for part of their time in Year 7 been helpful in supporting the process of transfer to secondary school as perceived by the students?*
- *Do staff directly involved in the nurture group think it has provided an effective way of supporting vulnerable Year 7 students?*
- *What aspects of the nurture group intervention are considered to have contributed to/mitigated against providing effective support to Year 7 pupils?*

Within this study, I also had an active role in supporting those involved as the school educational psychologist; therefore there is an element of inter-relatedness between the researcher and the subjects of the study, which will impact upon the level of objectivity that is feasible. Levering (2006) writes,

The question is not how to separate the subject from the object as much as possible, for subject and object are inseparable. 'I' and 'world' – the terms phenomenologists prefer to use – are inextricably entwined.

p452

Scott and Usher (1996) explain that the researcher is likely subjectively to attach a specific meaning or intention to any action, which will be affected by their prior knowledge, experiences and the particular context in which the study is based. In the context of this study previous working experiences with school have the capacity to impact upon expectations of implementing the intervention. Likewise my prior knowledge and experiences of working with nurture groups could affect expectations of positive outcomes, along with the wish to demonstrate success in this new circumstance.

#### 4.2.2 Quantitative and qualitative methods

Quantitative research is associated with a deductive, positivist research method, assuming that behaviour is regular and predictable. Johnson and Christenson (2003) note that quantitative research tends to use a 'narrow-angle lens' to attempt to study behaviour under controlled conditions. It provides measured, objective data derived from structured methods. The aim is to identify statistical relationships from which findings, in the form of rules, can be generalised.

On the other hand, using a qualitative approach allows the social world to be studied in its natural state. It bases research upon the assumption that behaviour is fluid, dynamic and situational. Johnson and Christenson (2003) refer to qualitative methods as using a 'wide-angle lens' to study social phenomena within the natural environment. The researcher becomes the primary data collection instrument and from the data, patterns, themes and holistic features emerge. However, this allows for a high level of subjectivity, rendering generalisation is more difficult from data obtained in this way (Cohen et al. 2007).

#### 4.2.3 Mixed methods

Mixed method research involves the use of both quantitative and qualitative research paradigms for differing aspects of the research design. Some authors (Patton, 2002; Buber, Gadner and Richards, 2004) argue that the epistemological assumptions of positivist and interpretivist research are incompatible and irreconcilable, so that mixed methods design which draw on both paradigms are wholly unacceptable, in light of different versions of 'the truth' which each assumes.

Epistemologically a positivist approach to research requires measurement of phenomena, using a clear set of variables and selecting participants in way which reduces the risk of bias (Patton, 2002). Trustworthiness and credibility must be assured within research (Mertens, 2003) and yet mixed methods research cannot be inherently valid since the positivist and interpretivist positions have differing criteria to inform judgements about validity. Buber et al. (2004) note that sampling constraints are put upon quantitative data as a result of combining data sets with qualitative methodology.

Other authors, for example Thomas (2004), argue, however, that these differing perspectives are complementary, combining to offer a fuller and more finely nuances account of a multi-layered reality. The counsel against purist 'Methodolatry', arguing that the risks of studying complex phenomena through a single lens world view inevitably reduce the depth of understanding that can be developed. Johnson and Christenson (2003) note advantages of using a mixed methods approach can lie in harnessing their complementary strengths and can provide corroboration of results, where there have been gaps in knowledge derived from a single method.



Giddings (2006) argues for a pragmatic research approach, using an inclusive, mixed methods approach in co-operative enquiry utilising both a positivist and interpretive stance. Robson (2002) notes that research methods may need to be hybrid in order to ensure methodologies are congruent with the needs of the stakeholder in addressing research questions, as was the case in this study, providing the “hard” data that the school staff required in addition to interpretivist findings, relevant in explaining why/how the quantitative changes had (or had not) been achieved.

The current study is primarily interpretivist in its epistemological orientation, concerned with eliciting and exploring differing stakeholders’ social constructions of a phenomenon (the nurture group), from their differing subject positions. However, to guard against charges of confirmation bias and the need to offer evidence that would be meaningful to those concerned with ‘hard outcomes’, quantitative data were also collected to indicate whether, in norm-referenced terms, the participating children’s progress had accelerated during their time in the nurture group.

This use of mixed methods had the capacity to illuminate what features of both the transfer experience and the nurture group experience had been experienced as subjectively meaningful by the various participants / main stakeholder groups, alongside consideration of norm-referenced data indicating pupils’ rate of academic progress. I judged that the use of combined data sets would afford opportunities to gain a fuller understanding of the bases for individual differences, as well as any overall trends in pupil’s responses to the nurture group intervention.

#### 4.2.4 Trustworthiness, reliability and validity

Positivist research methods are designed to guarantee that the same data and methods give the same conclusions, that the conclusions drawn from data are correct and results can be independently verified (Rasila, 2007). This degree of rigour is less possible in interpretivist research. Shenton (2004) states that in qualitative research the key question that needs to be addressed is:

“How congruent are the findings with reality?”

p64

Krefting (1991) discusses the implementation of Guba's Model of Trustworthiness of Qualitative Research (1981), which identifies four aspects of trustworthiness that are relevant to both quantitative and qualitative research; truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality.

Reliability can mean different things in relation to quantitative and qualitative research (Cohen et al, 2007). In quantitative research it refers to dependability, consistency and replicability and is concerned with precision and accuracy. Qualitative research allows for the possibility of replication if the same methods were used with the same participants; however, a fundamental premise of naturalistic studies is the uniqueness of situations, which renders this meaning of reliability problematic.

Lietz, Langer and Furman (2006) express that qualitative methodology has its own clearly established concept of procedures that allow for the objectivity and validity through which rigour can be established in social science research. Rigour regarding social construction requires an acknowledgement of multiple realities. The use of triangulation, reflexivity and prolonged engagement can add to the trustworthiness of social constructionist research (Lietz et al., 2007).

Validity; the degree to which an instrument or tool measures the trait or theoretical construct that it is intended to measure (Miller, 1991), is a requirement for both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. Cohen et al. (2007) summarise a range of types of validity, including content validity, internal and external validity, face validity, theoretical validity and evaluative validity. Cohen et al. (2007) note that research design must consider validity in terms of appropriate time scale, adequate resources to undertake the research, appropriate methodology for answering research questions and gathering types of data required and using appropriate sampling.

#### 4.2.5 Rationale for research methodology used within this study

Within this mixed methods study positivist data pertaining to reading and maths progress is provided by standardised measure. The Boxall Profile (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998) provided data regarding pupils' social, emotional and behavioural development, in line with the majority of nurture group research (Cooper and Whitebread, 2007). Pupil perceptions of their learning ability were measured by the 'Myself As A Learner' Scale (Burden, 1998). Repeated use of rating scales at intervals of time during Year 7 provided data regarding pupil perceptions of belonging and coping with transfer (based upon the work of Tobbell, 2003).

This study was, however, predominantly interested in the subjective experiences of the young people whom the nurture group was intended to support, and the staff and parents. Secondary data charting attainment, as required by the school, alongside the qualitative data, complement the subjective data. Reading tests were administered by the secondary school staff, as were standardised tests of mathematical attainment (Vernon, 1998; McCarty and Crumpler, 2006) as explained in Section 4.3.5.

For the qualitative data collection, questions for individual interviews and focus groups were developed, taking account of what was previously known about pupils' views of transfer (Tobbell, 2003 and Atkinson, 2006), as outlined further in Section 4.3.6. Use of case examples (discussed in Section 4.4.1) developing from the Cooke et al. (2008) study, utilised both qualitative and quantitative data, and also allowed for comparison of each, and the views of their parent(s) and school staff.

#### 4.2.6 Ethical considerations

Lewis and Lindsay (2000) explain that when carrying out research involving children, researchers should consider their age, general cognitive ability, emotional status and specific knowledge at the time of the research. Guidelines for research provided by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2004) make direct reference to participants, stating that participants in research have the right to be informed about the aims, purposes and likely publication of findings, and participants should give informed consent. Honesty and openness should be apparent in the relationship between the researcher, participants and others involved, and participants should have the right to withdraw at any time. This study was approved by the University of Birmingham (see Appendix 3). The main ethical considerations for this study are briefly outlined below.

#### 4.2.7 Ethical considerations for this study

The selection criteria for children for the nurture group intervention was carried out by the SENCo of the high school, who liaised in the Spring and Summer Terms of Year 6 with staff from the school's main feeder primary schools. The schools were asked to nominate pupils whom they considered at risk at transfer, whereafter primary school staff were asked to provide Boxall Profile data (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998) and Individual Education Plans

(DfES, 2004) for these pupils to ensure a fair selection process. From this process 11 students were identified as having the highest level needs; no child nominated by his-her primary school was turned down in this instance; the intervention group was designed to accept up to 12 pupils.

Parents of identified children were invited to attend a meeting within the nurture group setting where each was then offered the choice of whether they wished their child to be included in the intervention. The research element of the nurture group intervention was also explained by the school SENCo and nurture group teacher at this initial stage, where it was expressed that should a parent want their child to be included within the group their participation within the study was not required; children could engage in the intervention without contributing to the research process with no risk of adverse consequences arising from declining participation in the research. In the event, all parents readily agreed to contribute to the study.

Information was provided to parents and students explaining the nature of the nurture group intervention by secondary school staff. They were invited to an informal meeting at the school in July prior to transfer, where the nurture group was fully explained. I attended this meeting and also provided information to parents/carers and pupils regarding research in relation to this. Following this meeting a consent letter was sent out to parents/carers explaining the involvement the nurture group evaluation study and involvement in its application, purpose and safeguards regarding confidentiality (Appendix 1). The students themselves had the project explained to them using a script (Appendix 2), and were given the option to opt out of the research if they wished.

In terms of data ownership, it was agreed that the school would be responsible for the norm-referenced data, to which I was permitted access. The additional data collected is held by

me within the Educational Psychology Service in which I am employed. All data is initialled rather than containing full names. A copy of the submitted Ethics Form is included as Appendix 3, which provides detail of this.

### **4.3 Aims of the study**

#### **4.3.1 Links with previous research methodologies**

As reported in Chapter 2, there has been extensive research into the effectiveness of nurture groups (Cooper and Whitebread, 2007; Bennathan and Boxall, 2000), and also into the effects of secondary school transfer (Galton et al,1999) over several decades: however there appears to be little research exploring the value of using a nurture group to support transfer. 'Mini-school' approaches to transfer have been adopted, and evaluated using norm-referenced attainment data (Sainsbury et al, 1998). A positivist approach to investigating the effects of secondary school transfer was used by Dutch and McCall (1974), using a quasi-experimental design, with a matched control group to evidence the effects. Meanwhile, Tobbell (2003) and Atkinson (2006) adopted a qualitative approach, eliciting pupil views regarding the experience of transfer. Mixed methods research conducted into the effectiveness of nurture groups, such as that by Reynolds, McKay and Kearney (2009) has evidenced positive effects, using both quantitative and qualitative measures.

The current research builds upon the work carried out by Cooke et al. (2008), providing evidence of the effectiveness of using a nurture group approach to support vulnerable pupils in secondary school, via a case study approach. It also includes use of quantitative measures of progress, using the Boxall Profile (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998), and taking account of standardised attainment measures used by the focus school.

The research aims to provide an original contribution to knowledge and development of theories about transfer to secondary school. Through collaborative work with the secondary school, (Timmins et al, 2006) the study provides data describing the children's academic progress during their first year of secondary schooling; a time when other studies have shown that vulnerable students such as this target group, are likely not to make progress (Galton et al, 1999).

Main links of this study are to previous research by Tobbell (2003), investigating children's perspectives of the transfer process in relation to key themes, and Cooke et al. (2008) utilising a nurture group approach to support vulnerable secondary school pupils post-transfer and its evaluation.

#### 4.3.2 Overall research study plan

As noted in Section 4.2.3, this research uses a mixed-method approach, using both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The reasoning behind this arose from consultation with school staff regarding what evidence of effectiveness they sought, and would find convincing regarding the nurture group approach to supporting school transfer. In parallel, the value of a more qualitative approach was also acknowledged. This had the capacity to illuminate what features of both the transfer experience and the nurture group experience had been meaningful, and perhaps contribute toward explaining how and why the nurture group experience had affected participating young people. Brannen (1992) notes the value of mixed-method research in that the selective use of methods ought to be based upon the purpose and circumstances of the research. In this case, quantitative data regarding reading and mathematics skills, along with Boxall Profile data (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998), would meet the requirements of school as records of progress. In addition qualitative measure would inform a rich picture of the experiences of the young people, staff

and parents involved in the nurture group, to inform understanding of what works and for whom.

#### 4.3.3 Use of the RADIO model in working collaboratively with the school

Working in collaboration with school staff to create a meaningful evaluation of an initiative in school required careful consideration. The Research and Development in Organisations (RADIO) framework, (Timmins et al, 2006), was developed to support external researchers/change agents such as EPs in collaborative working with schools/developmental research in complex organisations. This model of 'self-reflective enquiry' enables exploration using research and practice. Ashton (2009) states the students' voice can be a powerful driver for change.

RADIO provides a particular structure for action research with a framework providing clear sequential steps to support and structure the process. It allows for flexibility in the methods of data collection and analysis (Ashton, 2009). RADIO consists of 12 steps, organised within three overlapping phases, as outlined below. The model provides a prompt the researcher and takes account of the complex nature of research in complex organisations.

Initial awareness of needs and invitation to act lead to a clarification of concerns of sponsors and/or stakeholders within the educational setting provides a clear, shared rationale for the project, and from this research models are explored and developed. The specific focus of concern is clarified to enable to negotiate a framework for data gathering. The data gathered are processed with stakeholders to ensure the analysis process is transparent and the reported findings rendered more meaningful, so that data processing can inform decisions about actions to be taken, which can be implemented and subsequently evaluated (Timmins et al, 2006). The model, as used in this study, is illustrated in Figure 4.1.



The RADIO model, as noted by Ashton (2009) provides a useful structure; however it has an important missing step. Ashton states that the model is helpful in making projects as participatory as possible but also cautions:

It is possible to create the illusion of participation in research  
when really there are people whose only involvement  
is to provide information on which others will make decisions. p228

This is particularly pertinent in schools, where adults are in a position of power, and whilst the views of students are often sought, they may not be acted upon.

Figure 4.1: Application of the RADIO Model, Timmins et al. (2006)

RADIO phases	RADIO stages	Typical activities
Clarifying concerns	1. Awareness of need	School-based concerns regarding the number of Year 7 students struggling to cope in school
	2. Invitation to act	Consultation with the EP regarding some of these students and opportunities for change
	3. Clarifying organisational and cultural issues	Exploration of the options available to the school and research of what other schools have done
	4. Identifying stakeholders	Discussion around how vulnerable children could be identified and key staff involvement & role of the EP
	5. Agreeing the focus of concern	Exploration of what was understood about 'Nurture' and 'Transition' – clarification of meaning and implications for practice
	6. Negotiating the framework for data gathering	Research regarding previous Nurture Group research and data required by the school to inform choice of methods through which to measure student progress.
Research methods mode	7. Gathering information	Boxall Profiles (Bennathan & Boxall, 1998) prior to entry & termly. School reading & maths assessments at the start and end of Year 7 & qualitative feedback from parents, pupils and staff
	8. Processing information with stakeholders	Written feedback to be provided by EP and presented to key staff (possibly whole staff meeting)
Organisational change mode	9. Agreeing areas for future action	The group is likely to run for 3 years. Assessment materials to be left for staff to be able to continue to use, following evaluation of first year's implementation
	10. Action planning	Stakeholder –led planning process for future action
	11. Implementation/action	Second year of the group to be monitored by school staff
	12. Evaluating action	Stakeholders reviewing effectiveness of the group and possible further EP involvement

#### 4.3.4 Design

This study was based in a small secondary school in an area which had previously been predominantly supported by the mining industry and had high levels of unemployment. The school had 665 pupils on roll at the time of the study and falling pupil numbers over recent years. The school had five main feeder primary schools, from which the children within the study were identified. Identification for the nurture group was based upon primary school staff's perception of these children having the greatest level of need and so being likely to find transfer to secondary school most problematic. Primary school staff were asked to provide Individual Education Plans (IEPs) (DfES, 2004) for the children put forward and complete a Boxall Profile (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998) to aid the selection process. There were enough places identified for 12 pupils and 12 were put forward by primary schools in this way, all of which presented as appropriate by secondary school staff involved, therefore no further selection process was required. One child did not attend this secondary school at transfer so 11 pupils started in the group, although one pupil moved away shortly after joining the school.

In answering the research questions set out in section 4.1, the rationale for use of a combination of quantitative and qualitative data was:

- the former would support statistical analysis of results regarding academic and social development over the time the students attended the nurture group;
- to complement other nurture group research (Cooke et al., 2008; Pintilei, 2009; Colley, 2011); that is beginning to grow in secondary school settings;
- to provide an interpretive picture of pupils' experience of transfer to secondary school and the support of spending part of their time throughout Year 7 in a nurture group setting with consistent support staff throughout their time in school; and
- to explore the experiences of staff and parents.

The pupils identified, by primary schools, for the nurture group to support transfer to secondary school had a range of needs. These are summarised in Table 4.1. A more detailed profile of the four pupils for whom there was more detailed case study data is provided in Chapter 6.

Table 4.1: Summary of needs of pupils in the nurture group

Pupil	Summary of reasons given for accessing nurture group intervention in Year 7
AD	A Looked After Child who had experienced recent changes in his care placement. AD was reported as having learning difficulties and low-level disruptive behaviour an increasing concern in Year 6.
MH	Learning difficulties identified across the curriculum, with some immature behaviour reported.
PH	Learning difficulties identified in literacy and numeracy. There had been reported concerns regarding bullying, with PH being the victim, in primary school.
BJ	Moved from a neighbouring authority in Year 5. BH was noted as being behind with his learning but also having some emotional difficulties and needing a high level of support.
AC	Behaviour, learning and language skills were all a high level of concerns, as identified by key primary school staff. AC's father had recently passed away and the family had moved house pre-transfer.
RM	There were some learning difficulties identified with RM. However, the main reason for his inclusion in the group appeared to be due to him being Diabetic, which primary school staff thought would make him vulnerable at secondary school.
PJP	Low academic attainment; accompanied with very poor attendance were the main areas of concern cited by primary school staff for PJP.
KWI	KWI had diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder, a statement of her special educational needs and individual adult support allocated to her.
KWO	General learning difficulties and poorly developed social and emotional skills were identified as making KWO likely to be vulnerable at transfer.

Pupils are listed on each of the measures in alphabetical name order. AC's surname changed toward the end of the study, which is why there is an alphabetic inconsistency in the pupil listings.

Staff involved in the setting up and running of the nurture group included: a member of the Senior Management Team who oversaw pastoral support across the school; the Pastoral Coordinator for Year 7; the Special Educational Needs Coordinator; a teacher who had taught at the school for a number of years but had originally been trained and had experience as a primary school teacher; and an experienced teaching assistant already in post at the school.

Pupils who attended the nurture group had timetables similar to those of their peers in mainstream Year 7 classes. However, key subjects areas were taught within the nurture group setting by primary-trained teacher, timetabled predominantly with this group, with the support of a consistent teaching assistant.

Pupils attended registration each morning and afternoon with their mainstream Year 7 form group. Pupils attended the nurture group for the following lessons:

- English;
- Maths;
- Humanities, including History, Geography and Religious Education; and
- Tutor time,

The nurture group pupils went into mainstream lessons in the following subject area:

- Science;
- French;
- Music;
- Physical Education (PE); and
- Information Technology.

For all lessons apart from PE, the TA from the nurture group was with the children, who were deliberately put into the same set for these subjects, to enable this support to be possible.

Within the nurture group setting, subjects lesson were taught, but the teaching methods were adapted to incorporate traditional nurture group principles (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998).

These included activities such as circle time to enable group discussion and an opportunity to raise any concerns; snack time; opportunities for games to help develop social skills; a high level of adult interaction with the pupils; and also opportunities for staff to model positive social interactions. For an example lesson taught within the nurture group see Appendix 5.

Four pupils from within the nurture group were selected by school staff, towards the end of the year, to participate in the case study element of the research. Staff were asked to make this selection based upon their knowledge of pupils, endeavouring to ensure heterogeneity of the case study sample.

The parents of the four pupils were then asked to become involved in data collection towards the end of the year, via interviews: a request to which all agreed.

The study used the following measures and methods of data collection to answer key research questions:

Table 4.2: Methods Used in Relation to Research Questions

<b><i>Research question</i></b>	<b><i>Research method/measure</i></b>	<b><i>Data to be elicited</i></b>
<i>What impact does being in the Year 7 nurture group have on young peoples' social and emotional skill development?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Boxall Profiles (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998) pre, mid and post-intervention</li> <li>- Semi-structured interviews with the nurture group teacher and TA after the first term and end of the academic year</li> <li>- Individual semi-structured interviews with a sample of parents post-intervention</li> </ul>	<p>Evidence of progress as measured by staff perceptions via Boxall Profiles</p> <p>Parental perceptions of children's development</p>
<i>What impact does participation in the nurture</i>	- School's existing literacy and numeracy skills assessment,	Reading and basic maths progress scores on standardised tests

<i>group have on the young people's academic performance?</i>	using norm-referenced tests, pre and post-intervention	
<i>Has being in a nurture group setting for part of their time in Year 7 been helpful in the process of transfer to secondary school as perceived by the students?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 'Myself as a Learner Scale' (Burden, 1998) after first half term and post intervention</li> <li>- Individual Likert scale activity regarding student feelings regarding transfer and sense of belonging at secondary school after first half-term and post-intervention</li> <li>- Focus group discussion with pupils after the first half-term in secondary school and at the end of Year 7</li> </ul>	<p>Comparison of pupils' self-perceptions as learners over time in Year 7</p> <p>Comparison of self-perceptions of being at secondary school from early in Year 7 to the end of the first year</p> <p>Pupil views early, and at the end of the year regarding the effectiveness of the intervention</p>
<i>Do staff directly involved in the nurture group feel it has supported vulnerable Year 7 students?</i>	- Semi-structured interviews with the nurture group teacher and TA after the first term and end of the academic year	Staff views early, and at the end of the year regarding the effectiveness of the intervention
<i>What aspects of the nurture group intervention are considered to have contributed to/militated against providing effective support to Year 7 pupils?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Individual semi-structured interviews with four of the students post intervention</li> <li>- Individual semi-structured interviews with a sample of parents post intervention</li> </ul>	More detailed case study information regarding the experience of being part of the nurture group throughout Year 7 from a child and parent perspective, using attendance data, school behaviour data, information provided by primary schools, individual interviews with the children, staff and parents as well as quantitative data as gathered for all children within the group

#### 4.3.5 Quantitative methods

##### Boxall Profile

Research question:

- *What impact does being in the Year 7 nurture group have on young people's social and emotional skill development?*

The Boxall Profile (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998) provides a framework for assessing the areas of difficulty of disadvantaged and deprived children (Boxall, 2006). This has traditionally been used as a tool to help identify children to attend a nurture group provision, to review their progress over time and to enable teachers to plan focussed intervention for individuals. The profile consists of two sections, Developmental Strands and a Diagnostic Profile. Within each are mixed statements of key social, emotional and developmental descriptors, which are scored 0-4, with scores then added to give an overall score for each designated skill area. Completion of the profile provides a score for five cluster skill areas, overall as follows:

Table 4.3: Strands and sub-strands of the Boxall Profile

Section I: Developmental Strands
<b>Main strand: Organisation of experience</b> A – Gives purposeful attention B – Participates constructively C – Connects up experiences D – Shows insightful involvement E – Engages cognitively with peers
<b>Main strand: Internalisation of controls</b> F – Is emotionally secure G – Is biddable and accepts constraints H – Accommodates to others I – Responds constructively to others J – Maintains internalised standards
Section II: Diagnostic Profile
<b>Main strand: Self-limiting features</b> Q – Disengaged R – Self-negating
<b>Main strand: Undeveloped behaviour</b> S – Makes undifferentiated attachments T – Shows inconsequential behaviour U – Craves attachment, reassurance
<b>Main Strand: Unsupported Development</b> V – Avoids/rejects attachment W – Has undeveloped/insecure sense of self X – Shows negativism towards self



Y – Shows negativism towards others Z – Wants, grabs, disregarding others
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(Bennathan and Boxall, 1998)

The Boxall Profile was initially standardised in the Inner London Education Authority on 880 children aged between 3 years 4 months and 8 years old in 1984. This has since been re-standardised and the 'Boxall profile for young people' published (Bennathan, Boxall and Colley, 2010). However this was not available at the time the current study was implemented. Results are scored and recorded using histograms for each cluster area and plotted against average expected performance, as identified by the standardisation sample, which is highlighted in green.

Much of the research into nurture groups by Cooper and Lovey (1999), Cooper and Whitebread (2007) and Sanders (2007) used the Boxall Profile as part of pre and post-intervention data in order to measure progress over the time spent in the group. Other nurture group research, such as that carried out by Cooke et al. (2008) also used this, despite the fact that their nurture group intervention was for secondary-aged pupils, and the Boxall Profile was standardised on a younger cohort, as was the case in this research. The rationale for using the Boxall Profile was that it fits with nurture group principles, enables comparison of results with other recent research into the use of nurture groups as a means of supporting Key Stage 3 students and, whilst standardised for a population between 3 and 8 years. At the time of this study, the Boxall Profile for Young People (Bennathan, Boxall and Colley (2010) was not available.

### Attainment scores

Research question:

- *What impact does participation in the nurture group have on the young people's academic performance?*

In addition to Boxall Profile measures summarised above, the research drew on school-based data for reading and mathematical attainment pre and post-intervention. Secondary school staff routinely conducted baseline literacy skill assessment for all students on entry to Year 7, using the Access Reading Test (McCarty and Crumpler, 2006), which is designed for use with students from age 7 to 20+ and assesses strengths and weaknesses in four key reading skill areas:

- vocabulary (word reading);
- literal comprehension;
- comprehension requiring inference or prediction and opinions; and
- comprehension requiring analysis.

The Access Reading Test gives standardised scores, reading ages and percentiles. This test was to be repeated at the end of the year for students who had been supported via the nurture group.

The Vernon (1998) Graded Arithmetic-Mathematics Test, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, was likewise used pre- and post-intervention. This provides standardised assessment of overall mathematical attainment, starting from basic number knowledge and increasing in difficulty. The standardisation took place on 3000 pupils of primary school age in the United Kingdom, Scotland and Canada. This was in 1975 so the norms are now unacceptably dated. The Vernon provides percentile and age equivalent scores and was the measure already used by school staff in the focus school.

Existing measures used routinely by the school were utilised, despite significant limitations such as being dated, the school's use of age equivalent scores and being standardised for use with younger children, in the case of the Vernon (1998) test. However, within the

collaborative action research staff preferred to build on existing measures rather than subject the nurture group children to further assessment for purposes of the study.

Maloney and Larivee (2007) provide evidence that age equivalent scores are the least acceptable form of norm-referenced measure in that they are unevenly distributed and skewed, making interpretation problematic. Angoff (1984) explains, age equivalent scores are intended to convey the meaning of test performance in terms of what is typical of a child at that age. However, problems with age equivalent scores include; when correlating age with test performance, depending upon which regression is used the age interpretation given to the same test score would be different. Angoff extols age equivalent is meaningful only if there exists an age for which the given test performance is average.

Both the literacy and maths/arithmetic assessments, in addition to the Boxall Profile (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998), were used to provide the school with the quantitative data that it required regarding student progress and provided secondary data sources within this study, despite the several limitations outlined above: a sacrifice in the technical rigour agreed within the collaborative research process.

#### 'Myself As A Learner' Scale

Research question:

- *Has being in a nurture group setting for part of their time in Year 7 been helpful in the process of transfer to secondary school as perceived by the students?*

Student perceptions of their learning and transfer experiences are central in judging the effectiveness of the intervention to support transfer. A standardised measure was selected for this purpose from the Psychology in Education Portfolio (Frederickson and Cameron, 1999). Part of this series focuses on children's self-perceptions. Burden (1998) developed the 'Myself As A Learner Scale' (MALS): a five point Likert scale regarding academic self-

concepts for students between the ages of nine and 16 years. Students self-rate on a series of 20 statements in a positive, negative or neutral manner. Statements are scored and totals can be compared to standardised scores obtained by Burden from a sample of almost 400 Year 7 and 8 students. These scores were used to provide a measure of self-perceived progress over Year 7, alongside qualitative methods, to provide a rich picture.

Burden (2010) states that the MALS is increasingly used for predicting and monitoring change in educational research, which is an indicator of how it is perceived by many professional educators. Norgate (2013) emphasises the need for some level of caution in using the MALS in research, however, noting that in the study of secondary school transfer using the MALS as a key measure, results failed to replicate the findings presented in Burden's (1998) study and suggested the need for further data collection to contribute to the MALS manual information. Despite identified shortcomings of the MALS, it was still able to provide a measure of pupils' perceptions of their learning and identify any changes over the course of Year 7 in these perceptions.

### Rating scales

Research question:

- *Has being in a nurture group setting for part of their time in Year 7 been helpful in the process of transfer to secondary school as perceived by the students?*

I developed a rating scale focussing specifically on students' experiences of moving to secondary school and attending the nurture group (see Appendix 7 for a copy of the questionnaire). Cohen et al. (2007) note that semantic differential scales provide useful evaluative tools, which build in a degree of sensitivity and differentiation of response, whilst still generating information which can be categorised and provide numerical data.

The use of discreet categories linked to statements supports respondents in offering their views in a controlled and consistent way.

The questionnaire consists of 18 statements in relation to moving into secondary school. These were based upon the five areas found in Tobbell's (2003) research using qualitative data to explore children's perceptions of transferring to secondary school. The types of statement are mixed within the questionnaire and mostly worded in a positive fashion but some as negative statements. Statements include:

- 7. I am confident walking around school.
- 9. Changing schools has been really hard.
- 11. I understand what teachers want me to do.
- 13. I can do the work in lessons.
- 18. Overall, I think that I have settled into my new school.

For each of the statements, students were asked to circle a number for their self-rating on a number line from 1 to 10, where 1 represents 'Not at all', 5 represents 'Sometimes' and 10 represents 'Very much so'. These ratings were compared across the group and over time, toward the start and end of Year 7.

Cohen et al. (2007) provide a note of caution: whilst useful, scales have their limitations, since response bias may undermine the reliability of responses. Individuals tend not to want to think of themselves in extremes and therefore can give mid-range responses. It is also noted that there is no way of knowing if respondents are providing an honest account, or whether they would have liked to have provided more in-depth responses. In order to address this latter limitation in the present research, additional opportunity was provided within an open-ended section at the end of the questionnaire where additional comments could be made. For example:

- "In Year 6 I was looking forward to moving to BVTC because...."

- “Things that have made it easier to move to secondary school are...”

In addition there was one open question:

- “How have you enjoyed being at BVTC?”.

along with a final opportunity to add any additional comments regarding settling into a new school. However, it is recognised that pupils’ use of these open-ended response opportunities will have been influenced by their literacy skill levels. There was not an opportunity to pilot the questionnaire due to time constraints.

#### 4.3.6 Qualitative methods

##### Focus group discussion

Research question:

- *Has being in a nurture group setting for part of their time in Year 7 been helpful in the process of transfer to secondary school as perceived by the students?*

To complement and augment the quantitative measures summarised above, and provide a more open opportunity for children to give their views, focus groups were used. (Appendices 7 and 8: explanation sheet and interview template).

Focus groups are useful for gauging the range of opinions and beliefs on a particular topic of enquiry and provide opportunity for exploring issues and can encourage increased participation to individual interviews (Kitzinger, 1995). Freeman (2006) notes that focus groups provide a rich and detailed set of data about perceptions, thoughts, feelings and impressions of a group of participants in their own words. Focus groups allow for group discussion among carefully selected individuals, capitalising on communication between research participants in order to obtain data (Kitzinger, 1995).

Cohen et al. (2007) note that focus groups not only provide opportunity for individuals to express their views, but group interaction helps data to emerge. Drawbacks of focus groups are also found in this vein, in that dominant individuals can affect group discussions, and the resultant data may be cumbersome and complex (Kitzinger, 1995).

Focus group questions used for this study can be seen in Appendix 9 and an exemplar copy of a discussion transcript in Appendix 10. The open ended focus group questions focused upon the children's expectations prior to moving to secondary school; transfer preparation; how students had found the experience; things that had helped; and how things were going to that point in time in their new school.

Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was used to analyse the focus group data, as it was for individual interviews in the study. This is explained further in Section 4.3.7.

### Semi-structured interviews

Research questions:

- *What impact does being in the Year 7 nurture group have on young peoples' social and emotional skill development?*
- *Do staff directly involved in the nurture group think it has provided an effective way of supporting vulnerable Year 7 students?*
- *What aspects of the nurture group intervention have contributed to/militated against providing effective support to Year 7 pupils?*

Semi-structured interviews were used to elicit the personal perspectives of teachers, support staff, parents and children (copies of the interview schedule are included Appendices 10, 11, 14, 19 and 24). The use of interviews aimed to elicit experiential data from those involved in

the intervention. Semi-structured interviews aim to provide individuals the opportunity to talk in detail and depth, within a conversational approach where the semi-structured format allows opportunity for the interviewer to ensure key content is addressed and to probe perspectives offered by the respondent, enabling a responsive interview dynamic in which subjective experience and meaning can be explored. Robson (1993) notes that when using semi-structured interviews there is scope for different levels of flexibility, within which the interview schedule should include: introductory comments; a list of topics to be covered (normally using a pre-written script), with key questions linked to this, and a set of associated prompts; and closing comments.

Interviews were transcribed, after which thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was used in order to interpret the data. Seidman (2013) points out that the researcher is often in a position of greater power than the interviewee, which can impact upon the data derived from interviews. This risk is difficult to avoid, particularly when working with vulnerable students. Attempts were made to get to know pupils and parents throughout Year 7 to help familiarise them with researcher. Nurture group staff were close-by as interviews took place with parents and pupils and the interviews took place in a familiar classroom next to the nurture group.

The semi-structured interviews used for data collection in this study follow a similar pattern to those for the focus groups, in that they begin with questions exploring expectations prior to moving to secondary school; progressing to discussion of what has worked well; what difficulties have arisen; what has helped the transfer process; what impact has transfer had on the individual pupils; how are they likely to cope in the future in secondary school; as well as an additional opportunity for comment at the end if required. These interview schedules were slightly adapted for individual interviews with students, parents and staff as appropriate and can be seen, along with transcripts of the interviews. (Appendices 14-28).



#### 4.3.7 Thematic Analysis

Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) explain that Thematic Analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data that act to interpret chosen aspects of the research topic. Braun and Clarke (2006) note that Thematic Analysis can be used within different theoretical frameworks with the aim of unpicking the surface 'reality'. Themes are developed from within the data corpus to capture something important about the data and present some level of patterned response. Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) explain that the search identifies themes which are judged important for the description of the phenomenon; this search is an iterative and reflexive process, with the primary objective to represent the subjective viewpoint of participants.

Braun and Clarke (2006) note that due to the diverse, complex and nuanced nature of qualitative data, thematic analysis provides a foundational method for analysis, with its strength in its flexibility for 'thematizing meanings'. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within a data corpus, such as interview data.

Braun and Clarke highlight the importance of recognising the researcher's role in abstracting 'emerging themes' or patterns from data. The researcher has their own theoretical position, values and underlying assumptions and therefore is by no means objective. Thematic analysis can be seen as an essentialist or realist method of reporting experiences of participants. Braun and Clarke (2006) also note that it can be seen as a constructionist method by examining events, meanings and experiences reflected upon from a range of discourses.

Braun and Clarke (2006) highlight some of the disadvantages of the use of thematic analysis as a qualitative data analysis methodology. For example, unlike narrative or other

biographical approaches, it does not allow for in-depth exploration of continuity and contradiction of an individual's account, and can be poorly conducted as an analysis with high levels of researcher subjectivity. Themes should be developed to illustrate and support analysis and not simply provide a collection of extracts from the data. There can be themes that do not appear to work, where there is too much overlap between themes, or themes that are not internally coherent or consistent. There can be a mismatch between the data and analytical claims, and claims may not be supported by the data. Good thematic analysis should show that interpretations and analytic points are consistent with data extracts.

#### 4.3.8 Use of Thematic Analysis within this study

Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was used to interpret and gain meaning from data obtained from focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews and from the open-ended questions on individual questionnaires. Thematic analysis can be inductive (bottom-up) or deductive (top-down). In this instance a primarily deductive approach was used to abstract meaning from the data, driven by the analysis of experiences of students identified in previous research into transfer to secondary school found by Tobbell (2003). Boyatzis (1998) explains how theory-driven and prior-research-driven codes can be used in the interpretation of data, whereby the anticipated meaning of expected results determines the composition of the code. In this way the goal of the research is to obtain insights and create frameworks with which to understand participant views and explanations. This approach was adopted within this study.

Braun and Clarke's (2006) model of thematic analysis was used within this study. The six phases to this approach are summarised in Table 4.4 below:

Table 4.4: Phases of thematic analysis

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarising yourself with your data	Reading and re-reading the transcripts/questionnaires responses, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to coded extracts and the entire data set, generating a theme 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report	Final analysis. Selecting vivid extract examples. Relating back of the analysis to the research questions and literature.

Braun and Clark (2006) p87

Boyatzis (1998) notes researcher obstacles inherent in a coding process: projection, sampling and style of coding, arguing it is essential to develop an explicit code, establishing consistency of judgement, reliability and remaining close to the raw information in the development of themes and codes. Five elements of a good code, as explained by Boyatzis (1998), are:

1. a label/name
2. a definition of what the themes concerns/characteristics
3. a description of how to know when the theme occurs/indicators
4. a description of any qualifications or exclusions to the identification of the theme
5. examples of those that fit and don't fit the code to eliminate possible confusion.

Aronson (1994) notes that themes that emerge from participants' pieced together form a comprehensive picture of their collective experience. In this study that collective picture is provided by children, staff and parents, of their reflective experience of a nurture group in

Year 7 to support transfer. This picture is collated from thematic analysis of the; focus group discussions with children, interviews with staff, and interviews with parents. The analysis of data aimed to be trustworthy via repeated checking of categories and themes emerging from the data corpus; then linked to the findings of Tobbell (2003). Once this had been done initial coding were checked to ensure a fit within the themes. An additional category was anticipated should the data not fit these themes.

#### **4. 4 Case examples**

##### **4.4.1 Use of case studies in research**

The use of case study approach aims to capture individual perspectives within the highly complex social situations differentially affecting individual students. Mertens (1998) notes that case studies can be seen as one type of ethnographic research that involves intensive and detailed study of an individual through observation, self-report and/or other means. It provides an opportunity for understanding complex issues and/or to add strength to what is already known through previous research. Zainal (2007) highlights limitations of other qualitative approaches and extols the virtues of case study as able to provide an holistic and in-depth explanation of social and behavioural phenomena in context.

Bassey (1999) notes that case studies recognise the complexity and embeddedness of social truths by carefully attending to social situations. In this way case studies can represent something of the discrepancies or conflicts between participants, allow generalisations and explanation surrounding the specific object in question, while longitudinal approaches produce a systematic way of observing events, collecting data, analysing information and reporting findings over time (Zainal, 2007). Cohen et al. (2007) recognise that context is a powerful determinant of cause and effect and argue that use of case studies

can provide a chronological narrative of relevant events and contributes to a rich and vivid description of real people in real situations. Similarly, Meyer (2001) argues that case study research provides the opportunity for an holistic view of the phenomena being studied.

However, a common criticism of case study design is the lack of generalisability of findings (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2001), due to the small sample size and the specificity of each case. However, it is widely accepted that findings derived from case studies can legitimately contribute toward theoretical generalisation. Cohen et al. (2007) highlight problems of selection of “the case” which will affect data collection and therefore the outcomes of research.

Researcher subjectivity may influence the case study and therefore affect the reliability of case study data. Meyer (2001) suggests that in order to guard against researcher bias, the researcher should explicitly recognise their presuppositions and make a conscious effort to set these aside in the analysis and rival conclusions should be considered. Reflexivity, the way in which all accounts of social settings and the social settings within the research is embedded are mutually interdependent (Cohen et al. 2007), needs to be considered within this study. The power and social relationships between the researcher (EP), in collaboration with school staff, parents and children, in addition to the context within the larger school, will have an impact upon the findings (Mertens, 2003).

#### 4.4.2 Case examples within this study

Research questions:

- *What impact does being in the Year 7 nurture group have on young people’s social and emotional skill development?*

- *What impact does participation in the nurture group have on the young people's academic performance?*
- *Has being in a nurture group setting for part of their time in Year 7 been helpful in the process of transfer to secondary school as perceived by the students?*
- *Do staff directly involved in the nurture group think it has provided an effective way of supporting vulnerable Year 7 students?*

For four of the participants in this study, a case example approach was used in order to gain an in-depth picture of their experiences of transfer supported via a nurture group approach. Students were selected toward the end of the academic year, following a discussion by the nurture group teacher and SENCo. These included: a relatively academically able child with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder; a child with social and emotional difficulties; a child with learning, behavioural and emotional difficulties; and a student who appeared to have fewer additional needs.

Existing data were used, as for all nurture group students (reading and mathematical ages; Boxall Profiles; Myself As A Learner Scales, and questionnaire ratings, as previously discussed in Section 4.3.5), plus additional interview data. The data collection for these four students can be seen in the summary table below.

Table 4.5: Case example data collection

<i>Data collected for all nurture group students;</i>	<i>Additional data collected for four case example students;</i>
Standardised reading scores Standardised maths scores 'Myself as A Learner' Scale 'My New School' rating questionnaires Focus Group discussion	Attendance data Behaviour record data Pupil interviews toward the end of Year 7 Individual parental interview toward the end of Year 7 Group semi-structured interviews with nurture group staff and the SENCo regarding individual students

Additional data from individual interviews with the students at the end of Year 7 (see exemplar transcript in Appendix 17), interviews with their parents (see exemplar transcript in Appendix 23), and detailed discussion with key staff involved in the nurture group (see exemplar transcript in Appendix 29), provided a more detailed account of each child's experiences of transfer. Data were collected regarding attendance at school throughout the year, alongside records of behaviour incidents logged on the school's behaviour system.

Data collection was affected by a number of factors. Selection of students for this more in-depth analysis of their experiences post-transfer was reliant upon school staff perceptions and decisions regarding the range of needs. In the event, not all the promised school-generated (secondary) data were provided for these individuals (reading and mathematical ages as discussed in Section 4.3.5), due to changes in the timetable toward the end of the year and absence.

## **4.5 Overview of research process**

### **4.5.1 Procedure for data collection programme**

All data collection took place throughout the academic year 2010-2011. Boxall Profiles were completed at the end of Year 6, with the additional data collated within the course of Year 7. For a detailed timetable of the study programme see Appendix 4. Table 4.6 provides an overview of data collection.

Table 4.6: Overview of data collection

<i>Data Collected</i>	<i>Participants Involved</i>	<i>Frequency of Data Collection</i>
Reading scores	10 Nurture Group students	Start and end of Year 7
Mathematic Assessment	10 Nurture Group students	Start and end of Year 7
'Myself as a Learner' scale	10 Nurture Group students	Start and end of Year 7
Boxall Profile	10 Nurture Group students	Start, mid and end of Year 7
'My New School' Questionnaire	10 Nurture Group students	Start and end of Year 7
Focus Group Discussions	10 Nurture Group students	Start and end of Year 7
Interviews with Nurture Group Staff	SENCo, Teacher, Teaching Assistant	End of Year 7
Interview with Nurture Group Staff for Case Examples	SENCo, Teacher, Teaching Assistant	Start, Mid and end of Year 7
Interviews with Students	4 Case Example Students	End of Year 7
Interviews with Parents	Parents of 4 Case Example Students	End of Year 7
Interviews with Senior Staff	Assistant Headteacher, Pastoral Coordinator	End of Year 7

Pre-intervention Boxall Profiles and reading and numeracy scores were obtained on pupils' entry to the school. Newcomer perspective data were collected half a term into the nurture group's existence for both staff and students, via focus groups and questionnaires as previously discussed in Section 4.3.6. Boxall Profiles were re-administered half-way through Year 7, in February and then at the end of Year 7 in July.

Post-intervention data were also collected at the end of Year 7 from staff, students and parents and by re-administering reading and numeracy assessments, questionnaires exploring pupils' sense of belonging and experience of the nurture group, and also the 'Myself As a Learner' Scale. Focus group discussions were repeated and individual semi-structured interviews with the four case study children, their parents and staff and case example children were undertaken in July 2011.



#### 4.5.2 Analysis of case study data

Quantitative scores were compared toward the start and end of the intervention to measure students' progress in their basic academic attainment skills, social and emotional development (as measured by the Boxall Profile) and self-perceptions on Likert scale questions used (Appendix 6). Analysis of the quantitative data is detailed in the Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Analysis of quantitative data

<i>Measure</i>	<i>Methods of Analysis</i>
Reading Scores	Individual reading ages compared at the start and end of Year 7 Group mean reading age calculated and compared at the start and end of Year 7
Mathematics Assessment	Individual mathematics ages compared at the start and end of Year 7 for those who completed the tests on both occasions available
Boxall Profile	Whole group strand totals compared for each strand, pre, mid and end of Year 7 Individual score comparison for case examples
'Myself as a Learner' Scale	Individual score totals compared for each student at the start and end of Year 7 Whole group mean scores compared
'My New School' Questionnaire	Comparison of ratings for individual students at the start and end of the year on each statement Whole group summaries at the start and end of Year 7 for each statement within the five key areas; comparison made over time

Interviews with children, staff and parents are compared and discussed in order to gain depth and explore levels of congruence in the experiences of the four children at transfer, each of whom was supported by the nurture group throughout the year.

#### **4.6 Application of methodologies**

The methods discussed were each used within this study to obtain a rich picture of the impact of the nurture group in supporting secondary school transfer. The evidence comprises data regarding academic attainment over Year 7 and the perceptions of those directly involved in the process from student, staff and parental perspectives. Theoretical prepositions, which case study data aimed to support, were that the nurture group had provided a 'safe base' for vulnerable pupils to gain confidence and adapt to secondary school. Consistent support from staff aided this process and that they were able to make academic progress taught in a small group setting by a primary-trained teacher. By the end of Year 7 the students would be more able to adapt and cope in the mainstream secondary school setting. This was hoped to be evident from pupil, parental and staff perspectives.

Results from this study are presented in two chapters. Chapter 5 offers an analysis of quantitative data, which is presented and then discussed in relation to the research questions. The second section of this chapter presents the qualitative data and discussion of these findings and their implications. In Chapter 6 the case example findings are presented and discussed.

## CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

### OVERALL TRENDS FOR THE NURTURE GROUP CHILDREN

#### 5.1 Quantitative measures

A range of quantitative measures was used in order to elicit data regarding the progress made by the ten students, selected through collaboration between primary school staff and the Learning Support Department in the secondary school, who attended The Link, the name given to the nurture group in school. Some of these measures were designed specifically for the evaluation of the nurture group and others comprised published measures which were more routinely used by the school in order to measure academic progress as part of its usual process of monitoring, in domains such as reading and Maths. The following research questions were addressed through analysis of these data:

- *What impact does being in the Year 7 nurture group have on young people's social and emotional development?*
- *What impact has the group had on the young people's academic performance?*

The quantitative measures used to obtain progress data for the 10 students who attended the Year 7 nurture group (The Link) are shown in Table 5.1:

Table 5.1: Quantitative measures used within the study

Skill area assessed	Measure used
Reading age*	Norm-referenced tests: Access Reading Test, (McCarty and Crumpler, 2004) and Group Reading Test 6-14 (GRTII), (Macmillan Unit, 2000)
Mathematical age	Vernon Graded Arithmetic – Maths Test (Vernon, 1998);
Social, emotional and behavioural skills	The Boxall Profile (Bennathan and

	Boxall,1998)
Self-perceptions as a learner	'Myself as a Learner Scale' (MALS) (Burden,1998)
Self-perceptions of transfer	'My new school' ratings, using a questionnaire designed for the study

\*age equivalents were used routinely for these measures by the school rather than standard scores.

The small group size, (n=10), which comprised the research sample precluded detailed statistical analysis of the data which are predominantly presented using descriptive statistics. In line with Bennathan and Boxall's (1998) recommendation that a nurture group should not consist of more than 12 pupils, and that more often is more effective with fewer pupils, the group established as a support intervention had capacity for a maximum of 11 pupils. Mertens (1998) quotes Borg and Gall (1989) in recommending a minimum sample size of 15 for causal-comparative or experimental groups for statistical analysis.

The design of the current study did not include a control or comparison group meaning the level of quantitative analysis which could be undertaken further was limited. With the current study there are also missing sets of data due to absenteeism and pupil movement between schools. Robson (1993) notes that in social research, missing data may be related to the question being investigated: in this case, a group of students with already identified vulnerability factors. Within the study one student was permanently excluded in the third week of Year 7 and therefore no data could be obtained for this young person.

Summary data tables and histograms are provided to demonstrate trends in the children's scores over time. At the end of each section of results, a discussion of that set of findings follows.

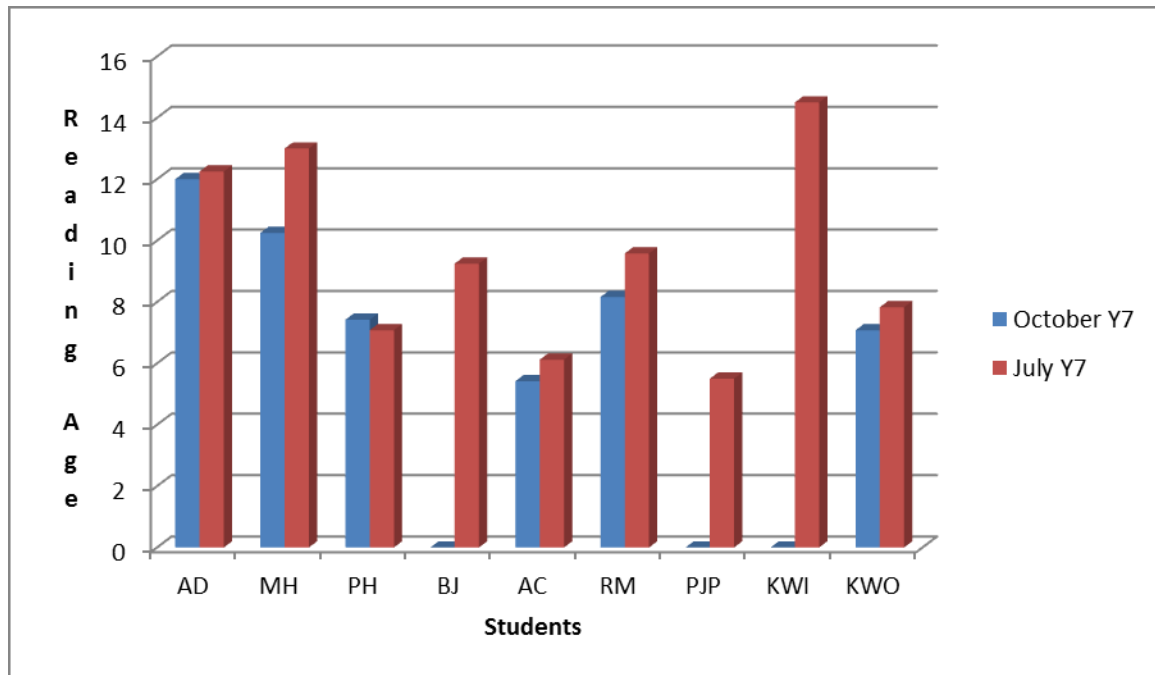
### 5.1.1 Reading scores

The school's routine reading skills assessment scores were used as part of the data collection pre- and post-intervention. Staff across the English Department within the school administer initial assessment measures to all pupils on entry to Year 7, and then at the end of each year. However, without reference to me, different assessment tools were used at the start, and toward the end of Year 7. This makes comparison and calculation of rate of progress difficult to determine reliably from the data provided. Age-equivalent scores were used to demonstrate skill levels and progress over time, within the school's data procedures. Using age scores as a calculation can be highly problematic due to their often being unevenly distributed (Maloney and Larrivee, 2007). Ratio gains demonstrate the reading age for a child during a set time frame expressed as a ratio of that time frame. Brooks (2007) suggests that ratio gains of 1.4 or higher are of 'educational significance'. For details of the assessment measures used, see Chapter 4, Section 4.3.5.

Table 5.2: Individual and group mean reading ages

<b><i>Pupil</i></b>	<b><i>Access Reading age equivalent start Year 7 in Months</i></b>	<b><i>CAT Reading age equivalent end of Year 7 in Months</i></b>	<b><i>Progress in months</i></b>	<b><i>Ratio Gain Over 10 months</i></b>
AD	144	147	+3	0.3
MH	123	156	+33	3.3
PH	89	94	+5	0.5
BJ	-	111	-	-
AC	65	74	+9	0.9
RM	98	115	+17	1.7
PJP	-	66	-	-
KWI	-	174	-	-
KWO	85	94	+9	0.9
Group Mean	100.7	114.6	12.6	2.6
Range	79	108	30	3
Standard Deviation	28.42	37.36	37.362.4	1.12

Figure 5.1: Histogram of individual reading ages



The data demonstrate that all of the students assessed on both occasions for reading demonstrated progress; however the data are highly problematic due to the different measures used on each occasion. There is a wide range of levels of progress seen, and results are skewed by MH's scores in particular. The range of scores increased from 79 to 108 between the two assessments, with a larger standard deviation variation from the mean of 8.94 months difference. On both occasions assessed the distribution of scores from the mean was wide, demonstrating the wide range of student ability within the nurture group. Overall the average ratio gain of 1.2 suggests that students made more than expected progress over the 10 month period of intervention.

#### 5.1.2 Mathematics assessment

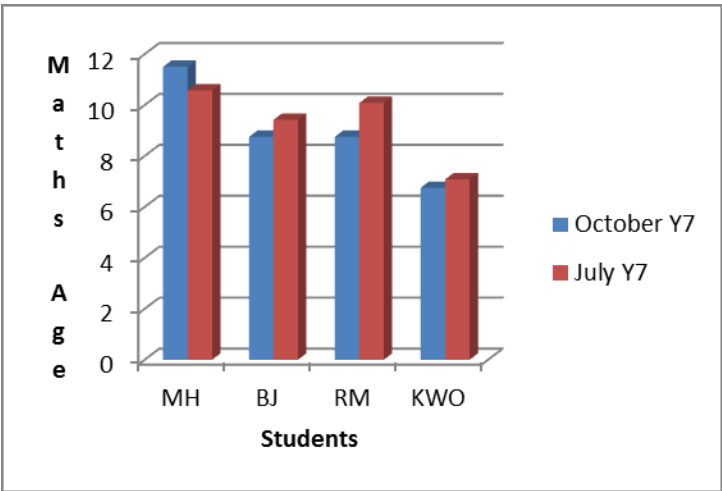
The school's existing numeracy skills assessment scores were used as part of the data collection pre and post intervention. As with the standardised reading scores, only age

equivalent scores were made available to demonstrate skill levels and progress over time, to tie in with existing school data presentation procedures. There is data for only four students. This was for a number of reasons: two children were absent for the initial assessment but did the second. Three other children moved up into a higher Maths set as a result of the progress they had made, as judged by the nurture group teacher, as the year progressed and were initially assessed but not included in the end of year assessment. For explanation of the Vernon Graded Mathematics (1998) Assessment, see Chapter 4, Section 4.3.5.

Table 5.3: Individual mathematics ages

<i><b>Pupil</b></i>	<i><b>Age equivalent start Year 7 in Months</b></i>	<i><b>Age equivalent end of Year 7 in Months</b></i>	<i><b>Progress in months</b></i>	<i><b>Ratio Gain over 10 months</b></i>
MH	138	127	-11	-1.1
BJ	105	113	+8	0.8
RM	105	121	+16	1.6
KWO	81	85	+4	0.4
Group Mean	107.25	111.5	4.25	0.625
Range	57	42	27	2.7
Standard Deviation	23.41	18.75	11.32	1.132

Figure 5.2: Histogram of individual mathematics ages



Results suggest that three of the four students assessed in basic mathematics over time made progress over Year 7. Ratio gains show that for three of the students they had made more than expected progress over 10 months of the intervention than would have been expected in this time. Interestingly MH, who made the most progress in reading, did not make progress in Maths on this assessment. The range of scores is less than in reading scores, but it is a smaller sample. Two of the four students' Year 7 experiences (BJ and MH) are explored in more detail as Case Examples discussed in Chapter 6.

### 5.1.3 Discussion of reading and mathematics data

#### Reading

Results suggest that the majority of students within the group had reading ages lower than their chronological age. Mean progress scores suggest that the group made greater than expected progress within the academic year (over 12 months' progress in the ten month interval).

Two students made greater than expected progress in the academic year (an expected ratio gain of 1.0 would be 10 months reading age progress in 10 months) and all who partook in both assessments demonstrated some reading skill progress. Compared to data reported by Galton et al. (1999), demonstrating that up to two-fifths of students fail to make expected progress in maths and reading post-transfer, it would appear that of the six students tested on reading, over the course of Year 7, all made some level of progress in their reading age score. However, it is important to bear in mind the possible influence of the different assessment tools.

Reynolds et al. (2009) measured academic attainment pre-and post- nurture group intervention in Glasgow Primary Schools, matched against a control group, and found that



over the six months of the intervention the children who had accessed the nurture group showed significant gains in academic attainment on early literacy scores. Likewise, Scott and Lee (2009) found greater gains in basic literacy skills for those who received nurture group intervention, as compared to the control group, although not at a level of significance. Results from this study would appear to be broadly consistent with findings of these earlier studies.

### Mathematics

Scott and Lee (2009) had demonstrated that those who attended nurture group provision made greater gains on a basic mathematics assessment having attended a nurture group rather than a control group. The results of the current study are too incomplete to support any such claims; however, they do offer cautious support for the expectation that progress at or above the expected rate during the year following secondary school transfer for some of the nurture group pupils.

#### 5.1.4 Boxall Profile data

Boxall Profile statements are scored 0-4 and added in clusters to give an overall score for the designated skill area. Data obtained are presented in tabular form for each student and then as histograms for the group on each of the strands. For detailed explanation of the Boxall Profile refer back to Chapter 4, Section 4.3.5. Table 5.4 provides an overview of the key components of the Boxall Profile, for ease of reference.

Table 5.4: Main strands and sub-strands of the Boxall Profile

<b>Section I: Developmental Strands</b>
<b>Main strand: Organisation of experience</b> A – Gives purposeful attention B – Participates constructively C – Connects up experiences D – Shows insightful involvement E – Engages cognitively with peers
<b>Main strand: Internalisation of controls</b> F – Is emotionally secure G – Is biddable and accepts constraints H – Accommodates to others I – Responds constructively to others J – Maintains internalised standards
<b>Section II: Diagnostic Profile</b>
<b>Main strand: Self-limiting features</b> Q – Disengaged R – Self-negating
<b>Main strand: Undeveloped behaviour</b> S – Makes undifferentiated attachments T – Shows inconsequential behaviour U – Craves attachment, reassurance
<b>Main strand: Unsupported development</b> V – Avoids/rejects attachment W – Has undeveloped/insecure sense of self X – Shows negativism towards self Y – Shows negativism towards others Z – Wants, grabs, disregarding others

Bennathan and Boxall (1998) p9 &14

### Section I: Developmental Strands (Bennathan & Boxall 1998)

The higher the score the better the child's skills on these strands.

Table 5.5: Developmental Strands of the Boxall Profile

Score 4: Yes, or usually: the item describes the child's typical behaviour. Score 3: At times: <i>if the child has definitely reached the level described but does not always maintain it.</i> Score 2: To some extent: <i>if the child only just reaches the level described.</i> Score 1: Not really, or virtually never. Score 0: Does not arise, not relevant.
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Bennathan and Boxall (1998) p7

## Section II: Diagnostic Profile

The lower the score the less difficulty demonstrated on these strands.

Table 5.6: Diagnostic Profile of the Boxall Profile

Score 4: Like this to a marked extent: *a striking feature of his/her behaviour; like this virtually all of the time.*

Score 3: Like this at times; *definitely fits the description at certain times but not at others, for example item 7: 'erupts into tempers etc'. There may be times when s/her is vulnerable to erupting into tempers when touched, but has periods when s/he is more equable and can tolerate being touched.*

Score 2: Like this to some extent: *fits the description but only to some extent either because the problems are not as extensive or as severe as described, or are not present to a marked extent.*

Score 1: Only slightly or occasionally like this: *e.g. the behaviour described arises in exceptional circumstances, for example item 8: transient baby behaviours sometimes seen when a sibling is born.*

Score 0: Not like this. (Leave blank if behaviour is not observed).

Bennathan and Boxall (1998) p9 & 14

Scores are shown where changes were seen over time as progress, deterioration or remaining constant, on the two sections of the Boxall Profile. In this way a picture can be seen for each student over the immediate period and into Year 7 for the key attributes identified by this measure. This data are shown first in tabular form and then as a histogram for the Developmental Strands and Diagnostic Profile.

Table 5.7: Individual student Boxall Profile data from the last term of Year 6 to the last term of Year 7

<b>Student</b>	<b>Profile Strands Developmental/ Diagnostic</b>	<b>Number of strands demonstrating progress</b>	<b>Number of strands remaining the same</b>	<b>Number of strands demonstrating deterioration</b>
AD	Developmental	5	5	0
	Diagnostic	6	4	0
RE	Developmental	9	1	0
	Diagnostic	3	6	1
MH	Developmental	0	3	7
	Diagnostic	1	5	4
PH	Developmental	5	5	0
	Diagnostic	10	0	0
BJ	Developmental	2	8	0
	Diagnostic	2	8	0
AC	Developmental	3	4	3

	<i>Diagnostic</i>	4	5	1
RM	Developmental	6	3	1
	<i>Diagnostic</i>	1	9	0
PJP	Developmental	5	5	0
	<i>Diagnostic</i>	3	7	0
KWI	Developmental	1	7	2
	<i>Diagnostic</i>	3	7	0
KWO	Developmental	3	3	4
	<i>Diagnostic</i>	0	0	10
Total		72	97	33
Mean		3.6	4.85	1.65
Range		10	9	10
Standard Deviation		2.72	2.57	2.74

It is evident that four students (AD, PH, BJ and PJP) made overall progress over the time of transfer. However, RE, RM and KWI each showed two or fewer areas of progression on the Boxall Profile ratings, over the period of transfer. MH, AC and KWO meanwhile, showed regression and appeared to have found the experience of transfer more difficult as measured by the Boxall Profiles.

Group Boxall Profile data demonstrate a wide range of score changes over time but mean total group changes demonstrate an average positive change of 3.6 compared to a mean deterioration of 1.65. Standard deviation of changes over time remained mostly consistent.

Individual Boxall Profile scores are shown for the pupils in the study on each of the three occasions completed in the following histograms.

## Boxall Profiles; group data

Figure 5.3: Histogram of Developmental Strand data

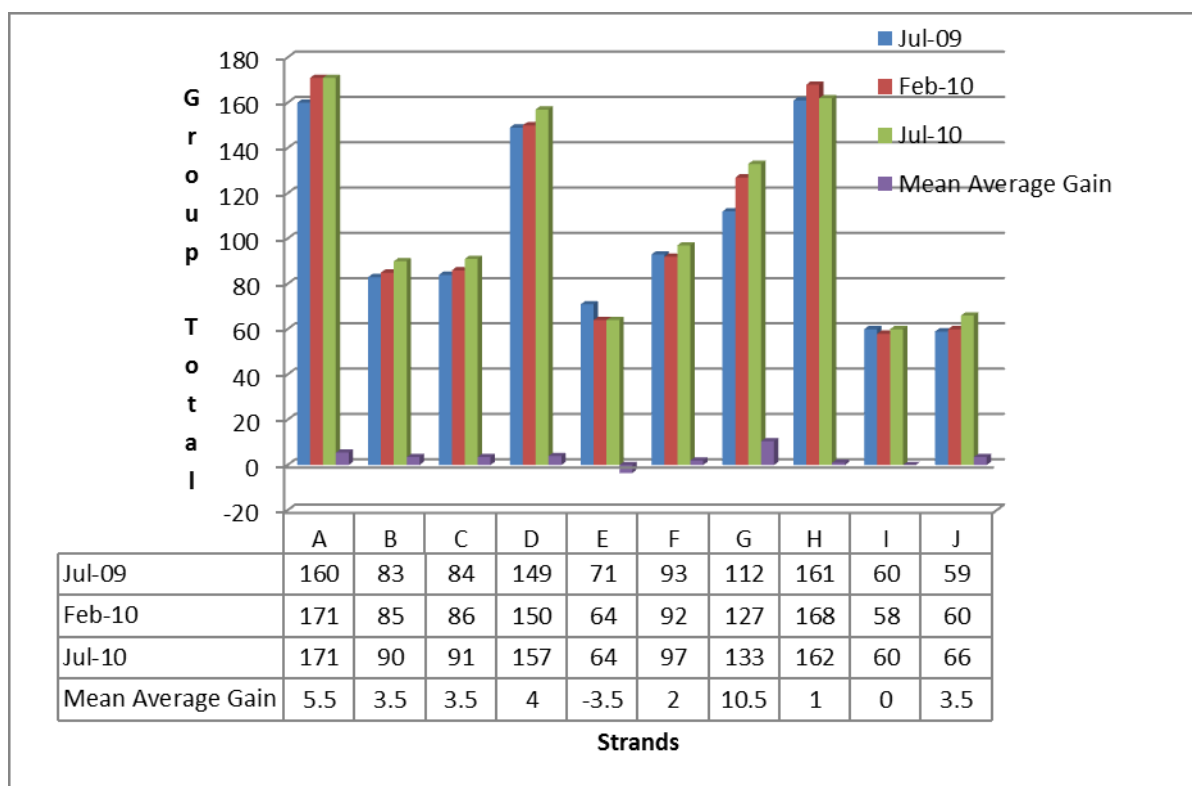


Table 5.8: Group Developmental Strand change and standard deviation

	Organisation of experience					Internalisation of controls				
Developmental Strands	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
Mean change	5.5	3.5	3.5	4	-3.5	2	10.5	1	0	3.5
Standard Deviation	6.35	3.6	3.6	4.36	4.04	2.65	10.82	3.79	1.15	3.79

Mean average gains on Developmental Strands demonstrate progress across the group in eight out of the ten statements recorded for pupils over the period from the last term of Year 6 to the last term of Year 7. This was most noticeably on strand G – ‘is biddable and accepts constraints’. No overall change was seen for I – ‘responds constructively to others’. The only statement where there was not improvement recorded was E – ‘engages cognitively with peers’.

Figure 5.4: Histogram of student Diagnostic Profile data

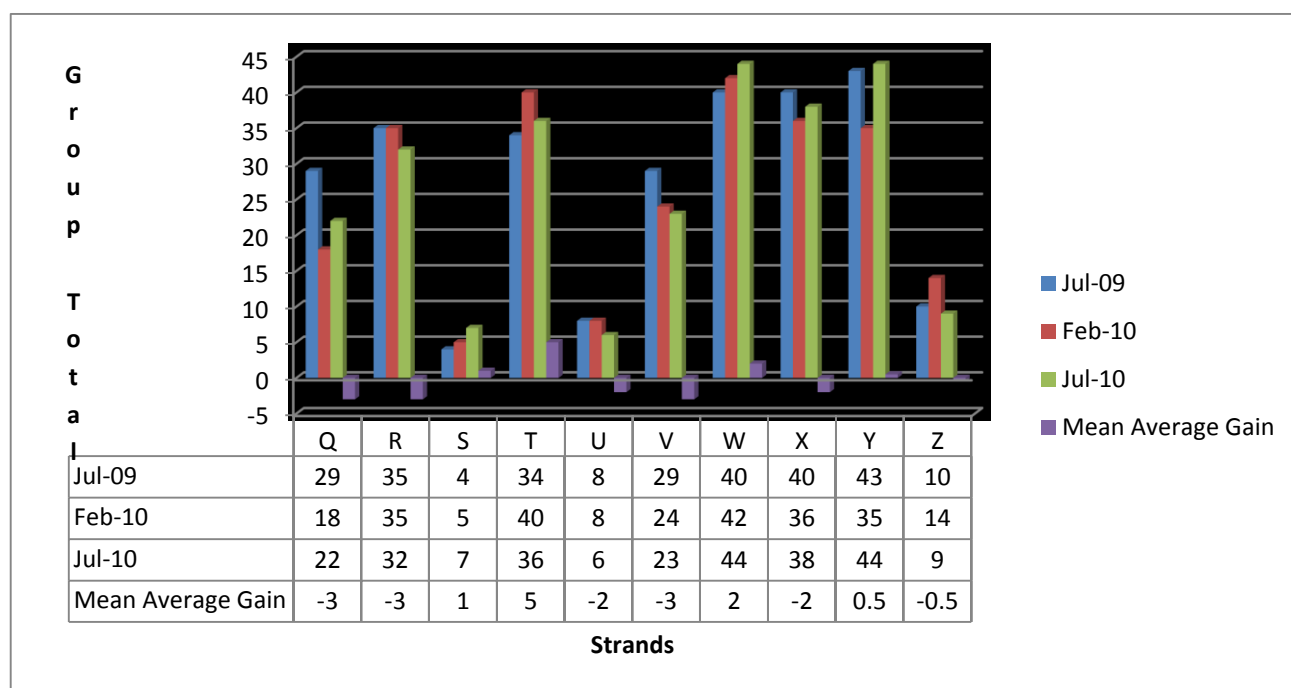


Table 5.9: Group Diagnostic Strand change and standard deviation

Diagnostic Strands	Self-limiting features		Undeveloped behaviour			Unsupported development				
	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
Mean change	-3	-3	1	5	-2	-3	2	-2	0.5	-0.5
Standard Deviation	5.57	1.73	1.53	3.06	1.15	3.21	2	2	4.93	2.65

Group Diagnostic Strand mean data changes demonstrate some progress over the course of Year 7 progress in five areas: Q, R, U, V and X which relate to being engaged, self-negating, needing attention and reassurance, attachment and showing negativism towards self. Negligible change is evident on statements Y and z, which relate to negativism towards self and disregarding others. No progress can be seen overall by the group in the areas: S, T and W; making undifferentiated attachments and developed sense of self.

Total Boxall Profile ratings from the three administrations to monitor progress in social, developmental and emotional skills over time would suggest that for four of the students (AD, PH, BJ and PJP) no areas of deterioration were identified from Year 6 ratings to the end of Year 7. Three students showed a small amount of deterioration on one aspect of the profile, (RE, RM and KWI). For three students a number of their developmental and diagnostic profile areas demonstrated a level of deterioration, (MH, AC and KWO). In particular two students appeared to have found the transition difficult (MH and KWO) and were doing less well in a number of the areas rated than had been considered the case at the end of Year 6.

It should be noted that the initial Boxall Profiles (for all except one student) were completed by their previous Year 6 Teachers and the later ratings (February and July of Year 7) were completed by nurture group staff.

#### 5.1.5 Discussion of findings from Boxall Profile data

These results, to some extent, reflect findings from other nurture group research using Boxall Profiles. Binnie and Allen (2008), for example, demonstrated significant progress on Developmental Strands for the 36 children within the study, although less consistently on the Diagnostic Strands. As noted in Section 5.1 results in the current study were not subjected to statistical analysis due to the small number of participants.

Congruence is evident in trends with attainment data for AD and BJ demonstrating small levels of progress on both attainment and on Boxall Profile scores. MH showed similar results in these measures, with a deterioration seen in both attainment scores and on the Boxall Profile. AC demonstrated limited progress on Boxall Profiles but made 9 months progress in his reading score.

Cooper, Arnold and Boyd (2001) found greatest progress on the 'Organisation of Experience' (statements; A, B, C, D and E), 'Internalisation of Controls' (statements; F, G, H, I and J) and 'Unsupported Development' (statements: V, W, X, Y and Z) sub-strands, in particular. By comparison, this was the case in this study in for 'Organisation of Experience', mostly true for 'Internalisation of Controls' but not so overall for 'Unsupported Development'. However, Cooper et al. (2001) studied primary-aged nurture groups, which may account for difference. Studies by Scott and Lee (2009) and Gerard (2005) both found evidence in a number of nurture groups of significant gains made on the Developmental Strands, with more mixed results on the Diagnostics Strands. This is also true of this study.

Cooke et al.(2008), in their evaluation of the impact of nurture group participation on secondary-aged pupils, suggest that the less consistent patterns of progress seen in the secondary school nurture group may be due to students in the study having less time in the nurture group and more in mainstream lessons than a traditional nurture group. Differences between younger pupils and adolescents could also reflect the effects if normal adolescent development, as could be the case in this study. Cooke et al. (2008) reported particular progress on strands 'D – shows insightful involvement' and 'H – accommodates to others'. This was the case in this study, although progress was poorly sustained on the latter. Results from this study were similar to those reported by Cooke et al. on the Diagnostic Strands, where improvement was particularly evident from Cooke et al.'s study on statement 'V – avoids/rejects attachment' following support from the nurture group. That this was also the case in this study, would suggest that using a small group nurture approach to support vulnerable students in secondary school is beneficial in developing attachment skills.

Cooke et al. (2008) demonstrated progression against the statements: 'Y- shows negativism towards others; which was not the case in this study. Mid-way through Year 7 re-rating had demonstrated progress in this area, but by the end of Year 7 this had diminished across the



group. By the end of year there was a move to re-integrate the children in more mainstream lessons, which changed the dynamics of the group. This may account for a number of scores that initially appeared to improve, where the rate of progress declined over the course of the year, suggesting that the intensity of the nurture group experience may be an important condition affecting its impact, as suggested by Cooper and Whitebread (2007), who found that the greatest social, emotional and behavioural gains took place in the first two terms of attending a nurture group.

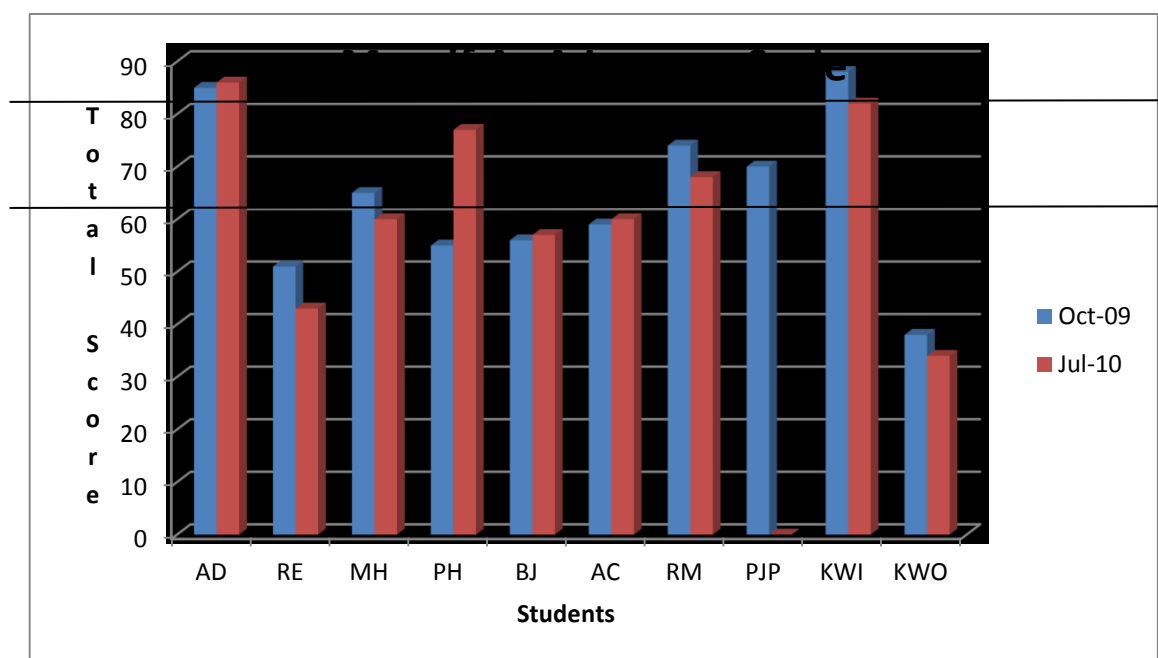
#### 5.1.6 'Myself As A Learner' Scale (MALS)

This standardised children's self-rating scale was used after the first half term and in the final weeks of the intervention (Burden, 1998). For detailed explanation of the measure see Chapter 4, Section 4.3.5.

Table 5.10: 'Myself As A Learner' ratings

<b>Student</b>	<b>Score Oct-09</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Score Jul-10</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>+ / - / =</b>
AD	85	High	86	High	+1
RE	51	Low	43	Low	-8
MH	65	Average	60	Average	-5
PH	55	Low	77	Average	+22
BJ	56	Low	57	Low	+1
AC	59	Low	60	Average	+1
RM	74	Average	68	Average	-6
PJP	70	Average	-	-	-
KWI	88	High	82	High	-6
KWO	38	Low	34	Low	-4
<b>Group Average</b>	64.1		63		-0.44
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	14.72		16.35		9.1
<b>Range</b>	38-85		34-86		-6 - +22

Figure 5.5: Histogram of group 'Myself As A Learner' Scale ratings



Above 82 is a high score and below 62 a low score (shown as two lines) (Burden, 1998).

Four students in the group, albeit significantly in only one case, demonstrated improvement in their self-perception as learners, whilst five pupils showed a deterioration in their self-ratings in their perceptions as learners from October to July in Year 7.

#### 5.1.7 Discussion of 'Myself As A Learner' ratings

Findings would suggest that the measure of pupils' self-perception as learners had mixed results over the course of Year 7. As a group the overall scores decreased by four points with the mean change for the group being minimal at -0.1. One pupil showed a larger improvement in self-perceptions as a learner over the period of the academic year, with an addition of 22 points. Two of the students had moves from one band to the next, although a number ( $n = 4$ ) showed some deterioration. As a group the overall scores decreased by four points with the mean change for the group being negligible at -0.1.

Norgate et al. (2013) used the 'Myself As A Learner' (MALS) scale (Burden, 2010) to measure pupils' academic self-perception between Year 6 and Year 10. Norgate et al. (2013) had a sample of 229 children, whereas there were only 9 students' scores compared over the course of Year 7 within this study. The mean MALS score for Year 7 students in Norgate et al. was 65.91 at the end of Year 7, which had dropped from 68.53 at the end of Year 6. Within this study it was 64.1 at the start of Year 7 and by the end of Year 7, 63.

Changes within the group in this study were not consistent across the group. Only one student made a high level of progress on this measure (PH). Three further students made a small amount of progress, whereas 5 students demonstrated deterioration in MALS scores. The children within this study, as was not the case in Norgate et al. (2013), had received a specific intervention to support transfer and there you might have expected less of a dip in scores. Key subject areas, English Maths and Humanities, were taught within the nurture group, whereas other lessons taught within mainstream school, therefore self-ratings of academic skills cannot be wholly attributed to time within the nurture group but this may have prevented further deterioration.

#### 5.1.8 'My New School' Questionnaire

This self-report measure was developed as a Likert scale activity, aiming to elicit students' feelings regarding transfer and sense of belonging at secondary school after the first half-term and toward the end of Year 7. The statements were based upon the findings of Tobbell (2003), addressing key areas identified by students in their accounts of what was important to them transferring to secondary school. Results are presented initially as individual scores demonstrating changes over time in Year 7. Results are then categorised within the themes identified by Tobbell (2003) for the whole group.

Table 5.11: Summary of 'My New School' questionnaire statement ratings

Student /Date	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	*8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	Total /Overall Ratings Score Change
<b>AD Oct-09</b>	5	5	10	10	5	1	5	10	1	10	5	5	7	5	10	5	1	5	105
<b>Jul-10</b>	5	5	5	5	5	10	6	7	10	9	10	5	5	5	10	5	1	10	118 / +13
<b>RE Oct-09</b>	4	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	1	5	5	10	5	10	5	5	1	10	131
<b>Jul-10</b>	5	5	5	10	8	7	5	5	1	8	5	5	5	10	10	5	3	8	110 / -21
<b>MH Oct-09</b>	10	6	10	10	10	10	10	10	1	10	10	10	10	5	10	10	6	10	158
<b>Jul-10</b>	6	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	1	10	5	5	5	5	10	5	1	6	129 / -29
<b>PH Oct-09</b>	8	1	8	10	7	8	7	6	5	9	5	5	7	8	9	7	6	10	126
<b>Jul-10</b>	8	5	9	10	8	9	10	6	4	10	7	8	9	10	9	9	6	10	147 / +21
<b>BJ Oct-09</b>	7	1	5	7	6	7	9	1	1	9	10	1	8	7	10	6	8	10	113
<b>Jul-10</b>	8	1	8	10	10	5	9	1	1	10	10	6	10	10	10	5	9	10	133 / +20
<b>AC Oct-09</b>	6	5	7	10	6	6	6	8	1	10	10	10	8	10	9	9	5	9	135
<b>Jul-10</b>	4	6	9	10	8	8	10	7	1	10	7	8	5	7	10	5	7	8	130 / -5
<b>RM Oct-09</b>	10	1	10	10	5	6	10	5	1	8	10	10	10	8	9	10	10	10	142
<b>Jul-10</b>	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	1	1	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	162 / +20
<b>PJPOct-09</b>	7	1	3	9	6	9	8	8	6	9	8	9	8	8	9	9	8	8	133
<b>Jul-10</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>KWOct-09</b>	10	1	5	5	6	8	5	10	1	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	141
<b>Jul-10</b>	10	1	10	10	10	10	10	6	1	7	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	155 / +14
<b>KWOOct09</b>	1	10	10	10	10	10	10	1	1	10	1	10	1	10	5	1	1	1	103
<b>Jul-10</b>	5	10	5	10	5	10	10	1	1	1	5	5	5	5	10	5	1	10	104 / +1
<b>Cumulative group total +ve change</b>	6	14	11	8	16	18	13	17	9	7	11	8	8	7	12	6	5	14	
<b>Cumulative group total -ve change</b>	6	5	15	5	7	6	5	0	1	1	5	17	10	8	0	10	5	7	
<b>Mean cumulative score change per item</b>	0	+9	-4	+3	+9	+12	+8	+17	+8	+6	+9	-9	-2	+1	+12	-4	0	+7	

\*Statement 8 is a negatively phrased statement, therefore a lower score indicates a more positive response.

Statements with ratings with a total mean increase over time of more than 10 were;

- The Teachers know me in school, statement 6: mean cumulative total +12;
- The work we have done so far in Year 7 is similar to that in primary school, statement 8: mean cumulative total; +17; and

- I enjoy lessons in The Link, statement 15: mean cumulative total; +12.

This would suggest that an overall improvement in pupils thinking that the Teachers had got to know them and suggest a positive impact of attending the nurture group. Tobbell (2003) found that from a student perspective, relationships were important for supporting transfer, would appear to be reflected in the pupil ratings in the current study.

Statement 8, in relation to the work done so far is the statement that was inverted; therefore a lesser rating over time would suggest improvement. The nature of the wording of this question may have affected the result in comparison to the others, but the findings would suggest that by the end of Year 7 students within the study thought that the lessons were increasingly like those in primary school. This could be interpreted as indicating that as they became more familiar and comfortable, then felt able to access lessons as readily as prior to transfer to secondary school. Binnie and Allen (2008) found that nurture groups provided successful opportunities for smooth transition and allowed for flexibility.

Statement ratings that had over all more negative responses (below 0 improvement on the scale) by July in Year 7 included;

- Teachers teach in a different way to primary teachers, statement 3: mean cumulative total; -4;
- Having different teachers for lessons is good, statement 12: mean cumulative total; -9;
- I can do the work in lessons, statement 13: mean cumulative total; -2; and
- I enjoy other lessons in school, statement 16: mean cumulative total; -4.

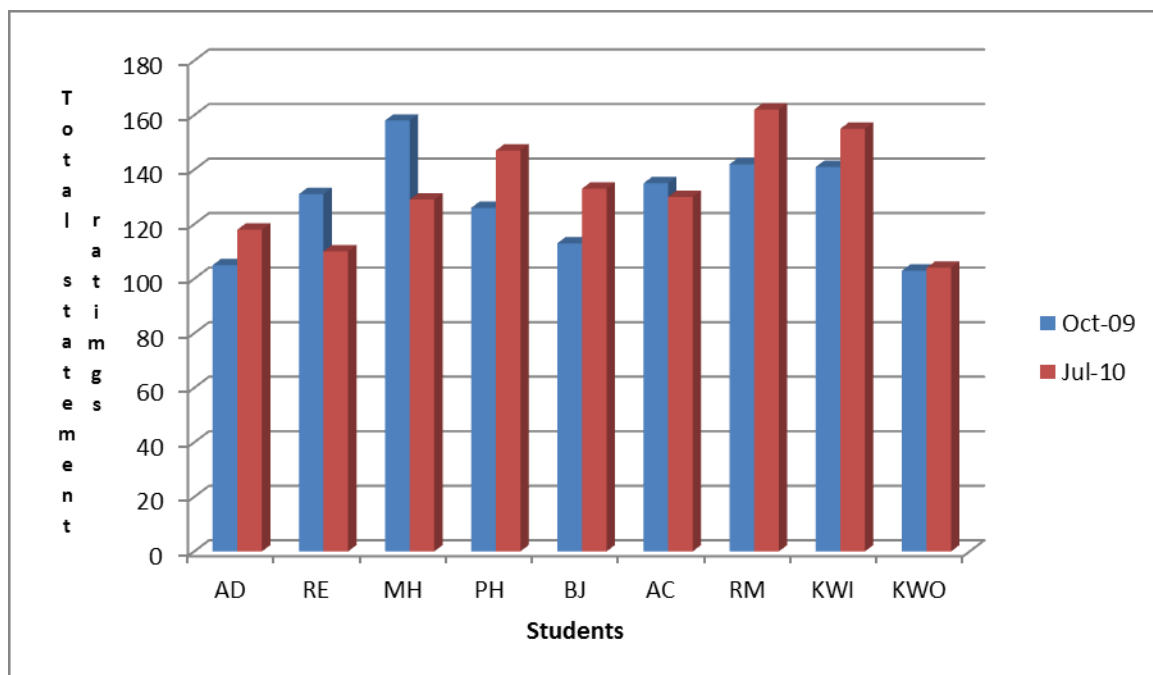
This would suggest that many students within the study did not think that the teaching style had changed post-transfer, or possibly over time this had become less of an obvious difference as they have adapted to changes in teaching style. Galton et al.'s (1998) large scale study noted the difference in teacher-pupil interactions comparing primary and

secondary school. It is noticeable that the students appeared to find having different teachers for lessons more difficult, as suggested by other group into the negative effects of transfer Nicholls and Gardner (1999) noted the importance of continuity in teaching across transfer. Durkin (2000) links the difficulties in coping with change at transfer with attachment theory, possibility having to cope with different teachers re-creating an earlier sense of loss. It would also seem that students in this study are not feeling confident about their ability to do the work in lessons and are enjoying lessons less than they had initially post-transfer.

Table 5.12: Summary of changes in student responses over time

Student	Number of positive changes (+)	No change (=)	Number of negative changes (-)
AD	6	8	4
RE	5	6	7
MH	1	10	7
PH	11	6	1
BJ	10	7	1
AC	8	3	7
RM	7	11	0
PJP	-	-	-
KWI	6	11	1
KWO	6	7	5

Figure 5.6: Histogram of individual student total ratings over time



On an individual basis 7 of the 9 students who completed the questionnaire on both occasions demonstrated more positive changes over the course of Year 7 than negative ones. Two students in particular, MH and BJ, gave ratings that overall were more negative at the end of Year 7 than the start. This would suggest that for the majority of students that attended the nurture group provision, to support them over the initial move to secondary school, gave more positive ratings by the end of Year 7. Cooke et al. (2008) also highlight the importance of consistent staffing in supporting vulnerable children post-transfer via a nurture group which was facilitated in this study.

#### 5.1.9 Discussion of group rating scale findings linked to themes identified by Tobbell (2003)

The following five histograms demonstrate trends over time for whole group responses to the rating statements. These statements were mixed on the questionnaire, but the statements were linked under the five themes identified by Tobbell (2003) and are therefore clustered and presented within these themes for the purpose of presentation and discussion of the findings.

### School as Community

Figure 5.7: Whole group responses; 'School as Community'

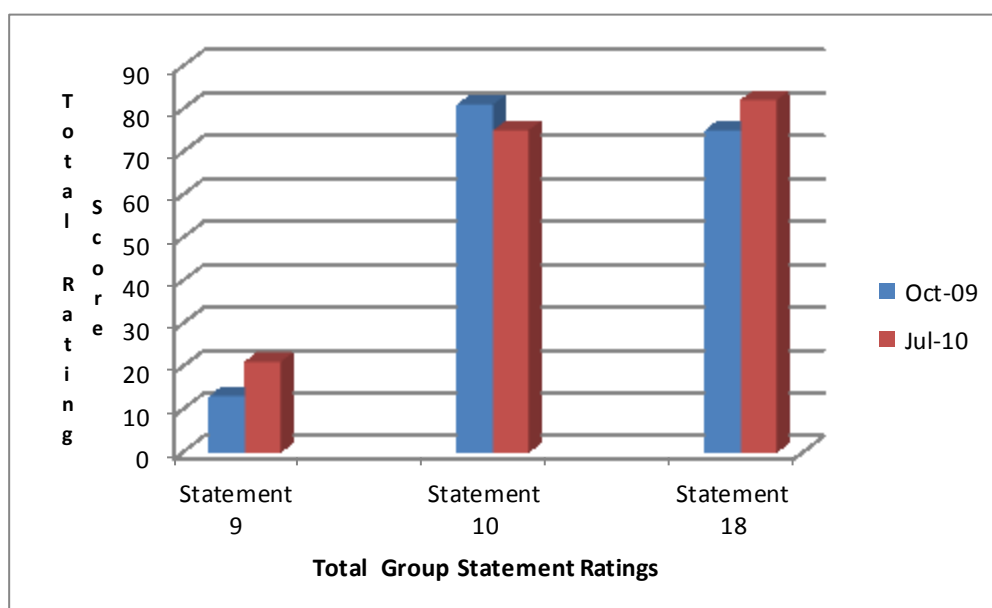


Table 5.13: Rating mean change for 'School as Community'

Statements	Rating change over time	Mean change
9. <i>Changing schools had been really hard.</i>	8	3
10. <i>I have a good group of friends in school.</i>	-6	
18. <i>Overall, I think that I have settled in to my new school.</i>	7	

Student responses show that their sense of belonging as part of the school community had improved. However, perceptions of how difficult it had been to change schools had increased as they had spent more time in secondary school. The students in this study had all been identified as being vulnerable pre-transfer. Feeling supported, to help enable emotional stability, was noted as key by Bailey and Baines (2012) as important. Attending the nurture group may have provided this support and the reduction in ratings could be explained by students being re-integrated back into mainstream lessons at the time the questionnaires were repeated in July of Year 7.



Friendships, as part of this sense of belonging, in terms of pupil perceptions over Year 7 have lessened. Tobbell's (2003) qualitative data demonstrated that friendships at secondary school had multiple references by pupils and therefore highlighted as important. Overall change for statements pertaining to 'School as Community' showed a positive mean change.

### Adult or Child?

Figure 5.8: Histogram for whole group responses; 'Adult or Child?'

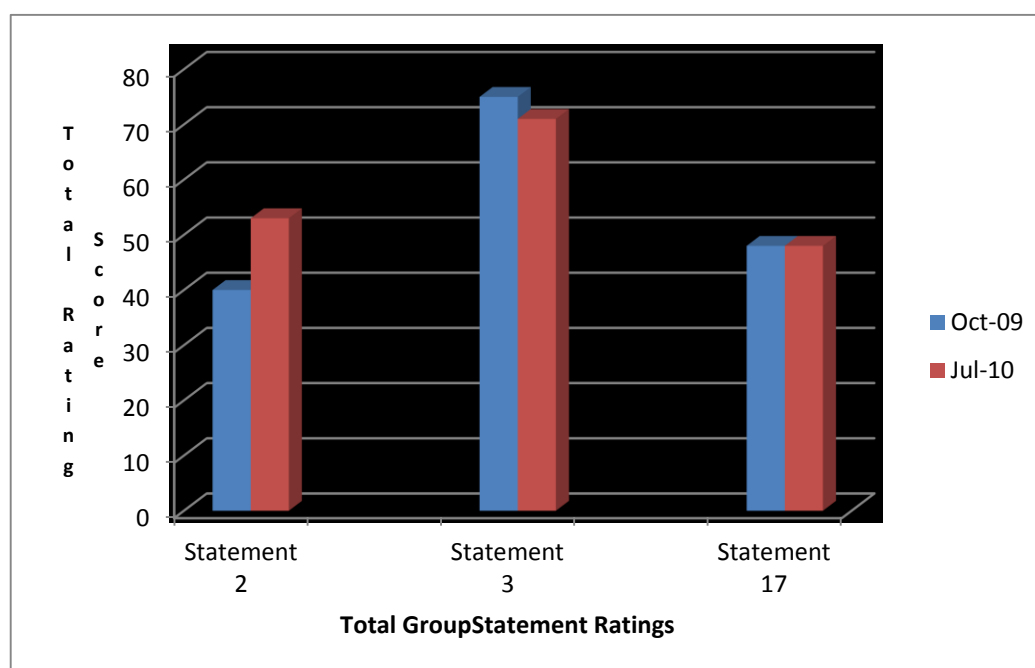


Table 5.14: Rating mean change for 'Adult or Child?'

Statements	Rating change over time	Mean change
2. <i>Teachers treat me like a child.</i>	9	1.7
3. <i>Teachers teach in a different way to primary Teachers.</i>	-4	
17. <i>Teachers treat me like an adult.</i>	0	

Perceptions of feeling treated in a more grown up way had increased over Year 7. However, changes in teaching style from primary school demonstrate an initial impact but over time this lessened. The ENABLE project (Bryan and Treanor, 2007) key principle was that children should be taught by primary teaches initially in secondary school, which was the case within

the nurture group in this study, it would seem more likely that initially the impact of this would have been seen more initially but in fact the opposite appears to have been the case. Overall perception of being treated differently over time demonstrated little change, as demonstrated by a mean increase of 1.7 in scores.

### What Makes a Good Teacher?

Figure 5.9: Histogram for whole group responses; 'What Makes a Good Teacher?'



Table 5.15: Rating mean change for 'What Makes a Good Teacher?'

Statements	Rating change over time	Mean change
6. <i>The Teachers know me in school.</i>	12	<b>-0.75</b>
11. <i>I understand that the teachers want me to do.</i>	9	
12. <i>Having different Teachers for lessons is good.</i>	-9	
14. <i>I can ask the Teachers if I need help.</i>	-9	

Student responses suggest that by the end of Year 7 teachers knew them better in their new school and yet no improvement in the perception of having different teachers. There was also a decrease seen for the students' perception of being able to ask for help.

This would suggest that relationships and getting to know a range of teachers at secondary school was overall mixed post-transfer. Galton et al. (1999) in their longitudinal study noted the differences in teacher-pupil interactions post-transfer, which would suggest that this is a significant change for Year 7 students to cope with. Students' in this study appear to have found this difficult and do not prefer it to the more consistent approach at primary school. Ainsworth and Bell (1970) noted the importance of there being adults emotionally available to children to be able to explore the world, having a Teaching Assistant within most mainstream lessons would have helped provide this initially. In this study it is evident that as pupils were increasingly reintegrated into more mainstream lessons, without this level of support, increased difficulties arose for them.

The increased integration into more mainstream lessons would have meant this was happening less often and may account for the negative responses of students to having different teachers and feeling less able to ask for help.

These results do not reflect findings by Tobbell (2003), in which it was identified that for some having a range of teachers was perceived to be better than having just one, as was the case at primary school.

### The Learning Experience

Figure 5.10: Histogram for whole group responses; 'The Learning Experience'

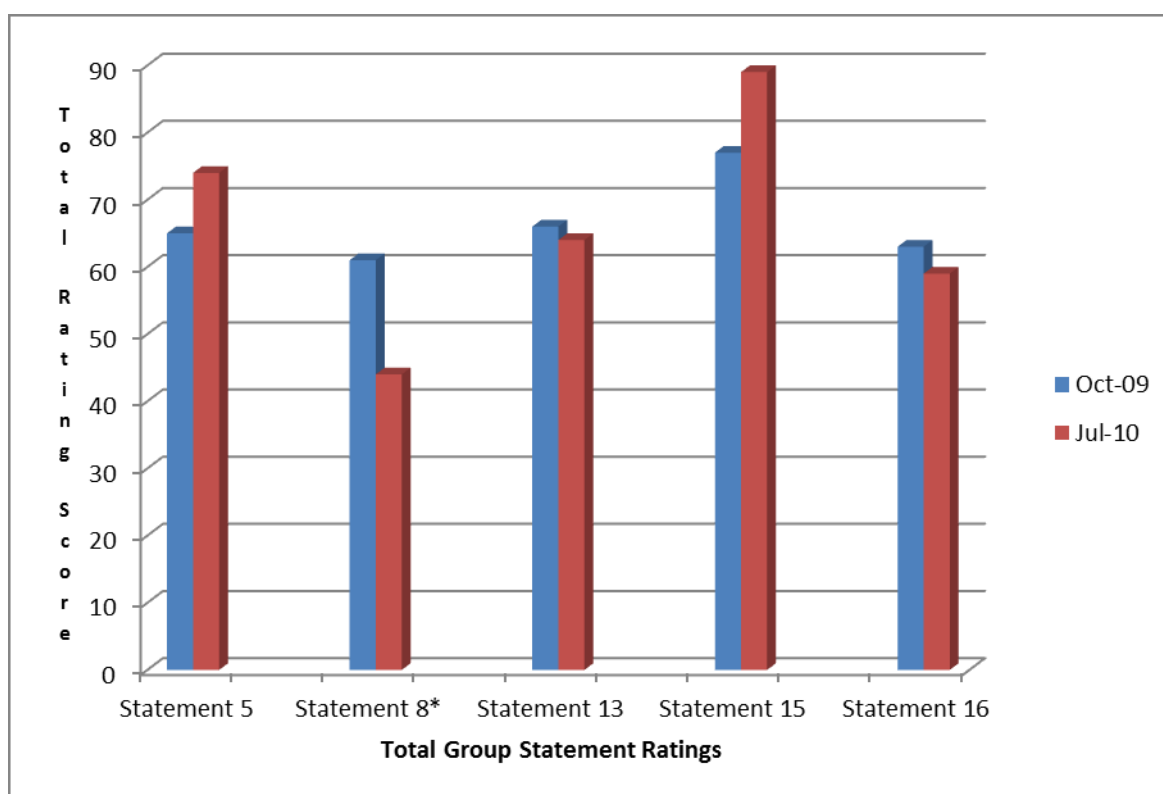


Table 5.16: Rating mean change for 'The Learning Experience'

Statements	Rating change over time	Mean change
5. <i>The work we have now is completely different.</i>	9	0.2
8. <i>The work we have done so far in Year 7 is similar to that in primary school.</i>	17	
13. <i>I can do the work in lessons.</i>	-2	
15. <i>I enjoy lessons in the Link.</i>	12	
16. <i>I enjoy other lessons in school.</i>	-4	

There has been an overall increase in agreement for statements over the course of Year 7 regarding a change in the work expected of students. By the end of Year 7 the overall trend had become more negative, suggesting that some students felt less able to do the work asked of them. Students clearly preferred lessons in the nurture group than they did other

lessons. This may be due to the higher level of support available to them, having a primary trained teacher and lessons that provided more of a focus on the development of social and emotional skills as well as academic learning. Cooke et al. (2008) noted the importance of consistent staffing within a secondary nurture group context and having a room solely for the students to provide a level of security. Binnie and Allen (2008) found that nurture groups could support transitions by providing a level of flexibility within the curriculum, which appear to have benefitted the vulnerable students within this study. Reading and mathematics scores over Year 7 in this study (for those able to be assessed over time) suggest that most students had made academic progress in these basic skill areas and yet perceptions in relation to work in lessons overall was less positive.

### Feeling lost

Figure 5.11: Histogram for whole group responses; 'Feeling Lost'



Table 5.17: Rating mean change for 'Feeling Lost'

Statements	Rating change over time	Mean change
1. <i>I feel that I belong at my new school.</i>	0	3.7
4. <i>I know where my classrooms are.</i>	3	
7. <i>I am confident walking around the school.</i>	8	

By the end of Year 7 none of the children felt that they didn't belong any more than they had at the start of the year. Responses also showed that confidence had increased over time in terms of walking around the school and knowing where classrooms were. The ongoing support of the nurture group may have helped with providing a secure base to go out and engage in new situations from (Geddes, 2007).

#### 5.1.10 Comments made in response to the open ended questions at the end of 'My New School' Questionnaires

Table 5.18: Responses to 'My New School' questionnaire statement 1

Questionnaire statement	Responses at the Start of Year 7		
	<i>Positive comments</i>	<i>Neutral Comments</i>	<i>Negative Comments</i>
<b>In Year 6 I was looking forward to moving up to BVTC because ....</b>	I would meet new friends, meet lovely Teachers. They stuck up for the person who is being bullied (a bully?) instead of the other way around. I was going to meet lots of new friends and lots of work. I knew they was better lessons like DT, Cooking. It's better than my old primary school. Of how big the school. I wanted to see everything the opportunity to walk around the school. I could meet new friends.	Not a difference.	The teachers were strict. I thought I was gonna be a man and not scared of the big kids who bully me.
Responses at the End of Year 7			
<b>In Year 6 I was looking forward to moving up to BVTC</b>	<i>Of the new things I was going to discover. Induction days/open night. I was</i>	<i>Of the teachers except for Miss</i>	

because ....	looking forward to meeting new friends and doing everything different. There would be more lessons and make more friends. Meet new friends. I wanted to learn more. I thought it would be good. Learn some new things. I was reunited with my new school mates.	B.	
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Table 5.19: Responses to 'My New School' questionnaire statement 2

Responses at the Start of Year 7			
Questionnaire statement	Positive comments	Neutral Comments	Negative Comments
Some things that happened to help prepare me for moving schools were ...	My visit to the open evening really helped me see what I could become. Transition day. Extra visits. Inset (inset?) days. Getting used to hard work. Come to the school for two days and saw are (our) Teacher. Getting homework. We had inset days to help me. I met J.... and do this group with other people. I got told by cousin.	(1 blank)	
Responses at the End of Year 7			
	Meeting some of the new teachers. Induction days. My brother telling me about it. We did a visit to the school and take to my new friends. In Y6 the work was getting harder. Induction days/open night. The teachers were nice.	Getting told off sometimes and produson (induction) day. Not think about it.	

Table 5.20: Responses to 'My New School' questionnaire statement 3

Responses at the Start of Year 7			
Questionnaire statement	Positive comments	Neutral Comments	Negative Comments
It has been hard moving to my new school because ...	Nothing!	(2 blanks)	I would lose all my old friends and missing all my Teachers there.

			Year 11 was going to beat me up. I sometimes get lost. Worried about the bigger kids Getting used to moving around school. Going class to class.
<b>Responses at the End of Year 7</b>			
<b>It has been hard moving to my new school because ...</b>	<i>Nothing x3. No because I was confident and brave. Because it's getting used to it. It hasn't. (1 blank)</i>		<i>I miss half of my friends. I have lost some of my best friends from primary.</i>

Table 5.21: Responses to 'My New School' questionnaire statement 4

<b>Responses at the Start of Year 7</b>			
<b>Questionnaire statement</b>	<i>Positive comments</i>	<i>Neutral Comments</i>	<i>Negative Comments</i>
<b>It has been good moving to secondary school because ...</b>	Nothing! Of the new stuff. I have grown up and stopped being a big wus. Meeting new students. It has longer lunch time and break times. Met lots of new people. The teachers are helpful more fun lessons. Meeting new people and meeting new Teachers and having to see what lessons I have.	I have seen some of my old mates and made some new ones. Nothing! (1 blank)	
<b>Responses at the End of Year 7</b>			
<b>It has been good moving to secondary school because ...</b>	<i>Do better things. It has. Playing games. I make me feel grown up. It's better than primary. Better lessons like PE because we do more sports like tennis. Because making new friends and doing different lessons. I can learn things that I didn't know before. Mrs Ps nice. (SENCo)</i>		



Table 5.22: Responses to 'My New School' questionnaire statement 5

<b>Responses at the Start of Year 7</b>			
<b>Questionnaire statement</b>	<i>Positive comments</i>	<i>Neutral Comments</i>	<i>Negative Comments</i>
<b>Things that have made it easier to move to secondary school are ....</b>	Doing a group with this lovely teacher and have been talking about it and thinking and feelings. Helpful teachers, fun lessons. Having some friends already there. In the mobile in the Link has helped us. Getting support of teachers. The lessons.	Nothing! Nothing. (3 blank)	
<b>Responses at the End of Year 7</b>			
<b>Things that have made it easier to move to secondary school are ....</b>	<i>Meeting new friends.</i> <i>Doing the induction days and open night.</i> <i>Came and saw what it was like.</i> <i>I have know people that have come to **** already.</i> <i>Visit the school.</i> <i>The Teachers helping me.</i> <i>The food.</i> <i>Meeting the teachers before.</i>	<i>Nothing.</i>	

Table 5.23: Responses to 'My New School' questionnaire statement 6

<b>Responses at the Start of Year 7</b>			
<b>Questionnaire statement</b>	<i>Positive comments</i>	<i>Neutral Comments</i>	<i>Negative Comments</i>
<b>How have you enjoyed being at BVTC so far?</b>	Yes, I have been taught new things and how to make stuff. The lessons and lunchtimes. Yes Yes! Yes if I was the President I would reward them with the worlds entire objects.	It ok. It's ok. (2 blank)	Not so good.
<b>Responses at the End of Year 7</b>			
<b>How have you enjoyed being at BVTC so far?</b>	<i>It's cool.</i> <i>The Link.</i> <i>It's been good I like it.</i> <i>Yes x2</i> <i>It's been fun – new experience, lessons, people.</i> <i>Yes because things are different to primary school.</i> <i>Dancing, football.</i>	<i>A bit.</i>	

Table 5.24: Responses to 'My New School' questionnaire statement 7

<b>Responses at the Start of Year 7</b>			
<b>Questionnaire statement</b>	<i>Positive comments</i>	<i>Neutral Comments</i>	<i>Negative Comments</i>
<b>Other things that I would like you to know about how I am settling in to my new school:</b>	Made new friends. Enjoyed PE lessons.	No comment x3. (6 blank)	
<b>Responses at the End of Year 7</b>			
<b>Other things that I would like you to know about how I am settling in to my new school:</b>	<i>PE and computers.</i>	<i>None. No. Nothing. NA. (4 blank)</i>	

#### 5.1.11 Discussion of written comments on questionnaires

A repeated theme throughout comments made is the importance of friendships to what pupils were looking forward, what has been good about moving school and what has helped them to cope, as found by other research into transfer (Tobbell, 2003; Zeedyk et al., 2003). Relationships generally were key to feeling supported and important at helping the process of transfer, getting to know staff as well as other students. The opportunity to have a range of different lessons was seen as mostly positive, as well as the security and consistency of accessing the nurture group. This fits with findings from other nurture group studies in secondary schools where this 'safe base' would appear to have provided a positive supportive factor in moving to secondary school (Cooke et al.; Pintilei, 2009; and Colley, 2011).

Atkinson (2006) found that homework demands were highlighted as a concern post-transfer; there is limited mention of this within these responses. Bullying is highlighted as an initial concern, but appeared to have lessened in reflections over time, which would suggest this fear was not borne out in practice. Measor and Woods (1984) noted high anxiety level

initially at transfer which reduced after the first few weeks; this would appear to have been the case for some students here.

## 5.2 Discussion of quantitative findings in relation to the research questions

The following table provides a summary of data for each of the students who attended the nurture group. A discussion of these findings in relation to the research questions follows.

Table 5.25: Summary of progress made by students on all quantitative measures

Pupil	Progress in Reading score in months	Progress in Mathematics score in months	Number of Boxall Profile Strands showing progress		MALS Score	Summary Rating Scale Scores
			Developmental Strands	Diagnostic Strands		
AD	+3	-	5	6	+1	+13
RE	-	-	9	3	-8	-21
MH	+33	-11	0	1	-5	-29
PH	=5	-	5	10	+22	+21
BJ	-	+8	2	2	+1	+20
AC	+9	-	3	4	+1	-5
RM	+17	+16	6	1	-6	+20
PJP	-	-	5	3	-	-
KWI	-	-	1	3	-6	+14
KWO	+9	+4	3	0	-4	+1

- *What impact does being in the Year 7 nurture group have on young people's social and emotional skill development?*

Given what is known about the possible negative effects of transferring to secondary school for vulnerable students, Boxall Profile data over time would suggest that three of the students who attended the Year 7 nurture group made progress overall on the strands which looked at their social, emotional and behavioural traits as defined by the specific strands for which staff rated them. Ratings for a further four students remained broadly consistent, in line with nurture group research (Cooper and Whitebread, 2007; Sanders, 2007; Ofsted, 2011). It would appear that, despite the support of the nurture group intervention, three students demonstrated increasing difficulty in a number of areas in terms of their social and emotional

skill development. Similar findings were shown in a secondary school nurture group by Colley (2011), where limited capacity to give time to this in a secondary school was seen to lessen the positive effects.

Reasons for this would appear to be varied. One student had experienced a traumatic loss pre-transfer and was struggling significantly in mainstream lessons. Another had a diagnosis of Autism and appeared to find the increased demands of secondary school challenging after one incident with another pupil in school, as reported by support staff. Another student presented as generally disengaged from school. These differences would appear to be similar to findings of Youngman (1978), where different 'groups' of students were noted post-transfer.

- *What impact does participation in the nurture group have on the young people's academic performance?*

Reading scores for the group suggested that all students assessed over time had made some progress with their basic reading skills. Measured change could not be relied on due to different assessment tools used by the school. Out of the 10 students, all were assessed on at least one occasion but only six on both occasions. Scores obtained would suggest that only three of the students had a reading age generally considered to be age-appropriate; the other seven would all appear to have some level of literacy skill difficulty.

Mathematics scores over time were only obtained for four of the students. However, one of the reasons for this was that three had moved out of the nurture group for Maths lesson, into a higher ability set which would suggest progress with their basic mathematical skills. Of the four students who were assessed on both occasions, three demonstrated progress throughout the time they were taught Maths within the nurture group, although one student demonstrate considerable deterioration in their score.

The 'dip' consistently noted post-transfer (Galton et al., 1999) is not seen with these students, which may be as a result of being taught English and Maths (for part of Year 7), within the nurture group setting by a primary trained teacher.

- *Has being in a nurture group setting for part of their time in Year 7 been helpful in the process of transfer to secondary school as perceived by the students?*

Student self-perceptions of the transfer process obtained from their completion of the 'My New School' questionnaires on two occasions would suggest that for seven of the students, ratings given at the end of Year 7 were more positive than ratings early in the year, particularly within the domain of feeling confident walking around school and friendships. Two of the student responses were however, more negative on the second occasion, which would suggest that their self-perceptions of their new school were less positive than they had been early on in Year 7. This was apparent for; feeling that they belong in the school and being treated differently by teachers.

'Myself as a Learner' ratings demonstrated four of the students their score had increases whereas for six students their scores had decreased. This would suggest that their perceptions of their capacity to cope with the work as independent learners were less positive by the end of Year 7. Each of the individual students who did give responses on the 'Myself as a Learner' scale also had the more positive ratings on the 'My New School' questionnaire, so similarities are apparent between the two measures.

- *Do staff directly involved in the nurture group think it has provided an effective way of supporting vulnerable Year 7 students?*

Boxall Profile data provided staff perceptions of student progress over time in relation to key factors identified by the profiles, focusing on students' social and emotional skills. Overall

progress was rated more positively for most students in comparison to starting measures pre-transfer, which would suggest that the nurture group has provided support to these students. It may have been predicted that this would not to have happened over transfer. However, the Boxall Profiles completed in Years 6 and 7 were completed by different staff, which could account for some differences. There may also be a risk of response bias; the Year 6 teachers were completing the Boxall Profiles for students they perceived to have high-level needs, and therefore require additional support, and the Year 7 nurture group staff were using the Boxall Profiles as a means of investigating progress over the duration of the intervention.

AD, PH and BJ had overall positive ratings from staff via the Boxall Profile and on self-ratings. RE had mostly positive Boxall Profile data, with only one area of deterioration rated, however self-perceptions on both measures showed some deterioration over time. The reverse was the case for AC, whereby self-ratings were slightly improved on both measures over time, and yet staff perceptions via Boxall Profiles demonstrated regression in a number of areas. MH and KWO demonstrated an overall negative impact of their time in Year 7 on all three measures. RM provided a mixture of responses, Boxall Profile scores were mostly constant, 'Myself as a Learner' scores had decreased over time and yet more general school ratings increased. KWI's Boxall Profile data were mostly constant with some areas of regression and progress, self-ratings for learning decreased over time but general school ratings showed progress.

Using just the quantitative data it is difficult to draw conclusions from the results regarding specific factors. However, comparison of individual student ratings regarding their settling in a their new school, perception of themselves as a learner and staff Boxall Profile ratings over time provide a broader picture of the effects of moving to secondary with the support of the nurture group. There can be no comparison made with regard to how these young

people would have coped going into full-time mainstream Year 7 and there was no comparison group within the study.

### **5.3 Qualitative measures**

#### **5.3.1 Overview of qualitative data**

A range of qualitative measures was used in order to provide an experiential perspective on transferring to secondary school with the support of a nurture group for identified vulnerable students. As detailed in Chapter 3, data were collated via:

- semi-structured interviews with the nurture group teacher and TA after the first term and toward the end of the academic year (transcripts in Appendix 31);
- focus group discussion with students after the first half-term in secondary school and at the end of Year 7 (transcript in Appendix 10); and
- individual semi-structured interviews with a sample of students and parents post intervention (transcripts in Appendices 17-20 and 21-25)

Thematic analysis was used to organise and abstract salient trends from the data corpus. In addition, individual case studies were made of four of the nurture group students, as identified by nurture group staff, to provide a range of student needs; these four case examples are presented in Chapter 6.

#### **5.3.2 Thematic Analysis of student, parent and staff interviews**

Deductive thematic analysis was drawn upon to abstract meaning from the data. A structured search for themes congruent with or dissonant from previous research into transfer to secondary school (Tobbell, 2003) was applied. The following section provides an

overview of the initial process of identifying codes from the data corpus, how these were developed into themes matched with the five key themes identified by Tobbell (2003).

Braun and Clarke (2006) identify six phases of thematic analysis, which were followed in this study (as discussed in Chapter 4, Section 4.3.8):

Table 5.26: Stages of Thematic Analysis

Stage	Action
1	familiarising yourself with your data
2	generating initial codes
3	searching for themes
4	reviewing themes
5	defining and naming themes;
6	producing the report (within the results of the study)

Braun and Clarke (2006)

Statements and comments made by participants were linked for similarity and coded together. From this, eleven themes were initially abstracted (as shown in Table 5.29). Themes were then reviewed to ensure that most comments would fit within these. These eleven themes were then analysed with the five themes identified by Tobbell, 2003. Almost all data could be matched to these broader themes, which provided a framework for analysis.

Data gathered over time from students and staff were examined in greater depth to identify changes, as shown in Table 5.36 and discussed following this. The process is described in the phases below.

#### Phase 1: Familiarisation with the Data

Interview and focus group transcripts were examined in detail, from following sources;

- Focus group discussions with the nurture group children in October and July of Year 7;



- Group discussion with staff directly involved with the nurture group in October and July of the academic year (the teacher, teaching assistant and SENCo); and
- Individual interviews with; four of the nurture group children (these are discussed in the Case Examples in Chapter 6); the Pastoral Coordinator for Year and a member of the Senior Management Team; individual interviews with four parents of children in the nurture group at the end of the academic year (the four Case Example students discussed in Chapter 6). This entailed familiarisation with the data, re-reading of the scripts and noting down ideas. The scripts were typed exactly from original notes at the time of discussion/interviews. The questions used for the focus groups and semi-structured interviews are provided in Appendices 8 and 14, the typed transcripts in Appendices 9 and 15-18.

#### Phase 2: Generating Initial codes

Initial codes were developed from the data, individually from pupils, staff and parental data at first, combined to find common codes. The initial codes for each group were as follows (an example transcript and identification of initial codes and themes is on Appendix 11):

Table 5.27: Initial codes identified from the data - Pupils

Initial Codes – Pupils
<p> Friendships  Extra visits / having a map  Family links / knowing people  Work  Homework  Meeting new teachers  The Link / Circle Time  Support  Bullying  Food / lunchtimes  Safe places Bullying  Teachers  Lessons / timetable  Finding the way around  Treated differently to primary  Detentions </p>

Better / worse than primary school Break / lunch times The uniform
--

Table 5.28: Initial codes identified from the data - Staff

Initial Codes – Staff
Feeling safe Range of needs Reintegration progress Familiarisation Flexibility of subject teachers Staff consistency Timetable issues Links to behaviour in other lessons Support / care element Relationships Behaviour difficulties

Table 5.29: Initial codes identified from the data – Parents

Initial Codes – Parents
Progress Ongoing needs Support / asking for help Small group advantages Sports Day Learning / homework Friendships Staff contact Behaviour problems Extra time in primary school Increased talking about school Increased independence Homework

From the initial three sets of codes one set of codes was derived as the data was examined to ensure comments could be incorporated. Table 5.30 shows this amalgamated set of codes.

Table 5.30: Amalgamated initial codes

Codes
<p> Friendships  Relationships with staff  Links between parents and staff  Preparation for transition – family, visits, maps  Learning / work  Support  Progress  Homework  Bullying  Teachers  Finding the way around  Small group / 'The Link'  Safe place to go  Flexibility of teachers  Timetabling issues  Break / lunch times  Uniform  Being treated differently to primary school  Better worse than primary school  Ongoing needs  Increased independence  Behaviour concerns  Sports Day </p>

### Phase 3: Searching for themes

Initial themes identified are as follows:

Table 5.31: Initial themes identified

Initial Themes
<p> Friendships  Preparation for transfer  Small group support  Safe place to go  Bullying  Work / homework  Teachers  Lessons  Progress  Support  Comparison to primary school </p>

Eleven themes were identified which incorporated all of the data with one exception; Sports Day was specifically mentioned by one parent, they said;

“I am worried about Sports Day tomorrow he is nervous, he doesn’t want me (Mum) to come and watch”.

Collation of the codes searched for potential themes that would fit with the five areas found by Tobbell (2003);

- School as Community;
- Adult or Child?;
- What Makes a Good Teacher?;
- The Learning Experience; and
- Feeling Lost.

Table 5.32: Themes linked to Tobbell (2003)

Themes	Link to Areas Identified by Tobbell’s (2003)
Friendships Safe place to go Bullying	School as Community
Comparison to primary school	Adult or Child?
Teachers	What Makes a Good Teacher?
Work / homework Lessons Progress Support	The Learning Experience
Preparation for transfer Small group support	Feeling Lost

#### Phase 4: Reviewing Themes

The following summary tables show comments made, positive or negatively, and how they fit with these themes from differing participant perspectives. A thematic map was developed from this.

Table 5.33: School as Community – themes reviewed

Pupils	
Positive comments	Negative comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New friends/seeing old friends</li> <li>• Teachers are nice</li> <li>• Other/older kids helped us</li> <li>• Having family links</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worried about bullies/older kids</li> <li>• Leaving old friends and teachers behind</li> </ul>
Nurture group staff	
Positive comments	Negative comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having the teacher/TA relationship as a model</li> <li>• Child friendships/the group gelled</li> <li>• Staff able to get to know children and parents well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited communication with wider staff</li> <li>• Other children's comments</li> <li>• Pastoral coordinator treated some students differently</li> </ul>
Other school staff	
Positive comments	Negative comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parental links</li> <li>• Relationships with staff/children</li> <li>• Having the TA as link person</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other staff's perceptions</li> <li>• Not able to sustain nurture group links/support</li> </ul>
Parents	
Positive comments	Negative comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New friends</li> <li>• Socialising outside of school more</li> <li>• Have got to know staff in the nurture group</li> <li>• Now talks about school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing social problems</li> <li>• More friends would be better</li> <li>• Staff contact not ongoing</li> </ul>
Common themes	
<p>The importance of friendships.</p> <p>Relationships are seen as key between all parties.</p>	
Differences	
<p>Lack of communication between staff and parents noted by parents, not staff.</p>	

Table 5.33 demonstrates that relationships were identified by children, parents and staff as important to the success of school transfer. Table 5.34 gives specific examples of comments made.

Table 5.34: Sample comments – School as Community

Participant	Sample comments made during interviews
Children	<p><i>"I've got more friends than in primary school".</i></p> <p><i>"Making lots of new friends has been good"</i></p>

	<p><i>"I've got some new friends; you can make friends and enjoy yourself".</i></p> <p><i>"Lots of good friends went to a different school".</i></p> <p><i>"I would lose all my old friends and missing all my teachers there". (at primary school)</i></p>
Nurture group staff	<p><i>"The small group has helped to get to know the children better / informally".</i></p> <p><i>"Nurture group staff were not included in the process (when one pupil was excluded at the start of Year 7). She had been doing well in The Link, we had built a good relationship with her".</i></p>
Wider school staff	<p><i>"Some of the staff think it is the naughty kids in the group and don't understand it".</i></p> <p><i>"I am not sure all of the staff have understood why the children are in there".</i></p> <p><i>"If the nurture group had had them all the time they would have been fine".</i></p>
Parents	<p><i>"At first she made new friends, she has still got some but they do turn on her at times, on particular girl has caused a problem".</i></p> <p><i>"As far as I know, he has made friends; he calls for someone before school - he wouldn't before".</i></p> <p><i>"He is going out with friends much more, he used to stay in his room".</i></p>

Meeting and making new friends was seen as important, both in and outside of school, to children and parents. The sense of loss at leaving others behind was a factor identified by children in the transfer process, although this was limited, the focus tended to be upon the new experiences and friendships available at their new school.

In relation to what had been hard about transferring schools, a supportive factor to help belong to the school community was already knowing someone at the school and getting to know staff within the school. The nurture group was considered, by pupils and parents, to have facilitated this and provided supportive links between home and school.

Within the school staff, community relationships were identified as important, with the lack of these considered problematic for understanding the work of the nurture group. Within the first three weeks of term one child from the group had been permanently excluded, prior to

data collection. Staff expressed their upset about this and viewed it as indicative of a lack of understanding of the support the group could have provided to avoid this. They considered that they had not been consulted regarding this decision.

Table 5.35: Adult or Child? – themes reviewed

Pupils	
Positive comments	Negative comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It feels better than primary/we are treated differently</li> <li>• Had to be strong and grown up when I started / I'm coping well</li> <li>• Having support helps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You get detentions</li> </ul>
Nurture group staff	
Positive comments	Negative comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Care issues have been dealt with in the nurture group, e.g. change of clothes / emotional distress</li> <li>• Transition issues have been supported</li> <li>• Seen a change in confidence, self-esteem and ability to cope</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the third term children have not coped back into mainstream classes</li> </ul>
Other school staff	
Positive comments	Negative comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A range of needs have been supported</li> <li>• One child with ASD would not have coped in a bigger class at first and not been able to get on with learning without the nurture group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-integration needs to be carefully planned for</li> </ul>
Parents	
Positive comments	Negative comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting on better now than at primary school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-integration needs to be carefully planned for</li> </ul>
Common themes	
<p>Nurture group recognised as playing an important role in supporting difficulties where students lack maturity.</p> <p>Children recognised they have been treated differently but have liked feeling supported.</p>	
Differences	
<p>Parents and staff recognised less mature behaviours, the children did not.</p> <p>Reintegration had been a problem at the end of Year 7, needed to be better planned for. The children did not seem ready for this.</p>	

Table 5.35 identifies ways in which children felt they were treated differently in secondary school in comparison to their previous school experience. Table 5.36 gives sample comments demonstrating this:

Table 5.36: Sample comments – Adult or Child?

Participant	Sample comments made during interviews
Children	<i>"It makes me feel grown up".</i> <i>"They talked to you like a baby at primary, it is better because they speak to you like an adult more often."</i> <i>"Yes, 100% feel treated differently from my old school, I have been given lots of opportunities".</i> <i>"Being treated properly, not like a three year old, more like an adult".</i>
Nurture group staff	<i>"With transition in the third term back into mainstream Humanities for the more able students, behaviour has deteriorated in other classes".</i> <i>"The ASD child would not have coped without (the nurture group) and wouldn't have come on with learning as she has this year".</i> <i>"Some staff will say 'they are one of yours', they are aware of the group".</i> <i>"The Pastoral Coordinator has been more lenient with the children at times, especially for some of the boys".</i>
Parents	<i>"He is a bit more outspoken now... he has come out of shell a bit more, not loads but a big achievement".</i> <i>"The smaller group has helped him, he wouldn't have coped in just the big groups at first."</i>

The students felt that they preferred the way they were treated at secondary school, but valued the 'protection' that the nurture group provided in this more grown-up environment. Staff expressed views regarding being conscious of the level and range of needs of students within the nurture group and valued the supportive element this approach allowed. Concerns were raised about carefully managing reintegration into full-time mainstream school.

Wider difficulties that student experienced were also able to be addressed via the nurture group and change was noted in self-confidence of the students, although this did not extend into the final trimester of the year when a rushed reintegration took place. Parents also saw



a gain in student confidence, although were still aware of some of the difficulties and immaturities that their children had.

There was recognition by staff that the nurture group children may have been treated differently by other staff in school due to the awareness of need and the different provision in place for them.

Table 5.37: What Makes a Good Teacher? – themes reviewed

Pupils	
Positive comments	Negative comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nice teachers in our new school</li> <li>The Link teacher and TA are good / supportive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>some of the teaches are strict</li> <li>Different teachers have different styles / treat you differently</li> </ul>
Nurture group staff	
Positive comments	Negative comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The nurture group teacher having Primary teaching experience has helped / been a positive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>
Other school staff	
Positive comments	Negative comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The nurture group teacher's enthusiasm has made it work well</li> <li>If the nurture group teacher had been with them all the time the group would have been fine</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All staff are not skills enough to cope with the needs of these children</li> <li>There are training issues for all staff – could; learn from the nurture group approach</li> </ul>
Parents	
Positive comments	Negative comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The support has helped</li> <li>The Link has been good for her</li> <li>Having a TA in class is good</li> <li>Staff have more than they did at primary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>
Common themes	
<p>The nurture group teacher approach, experience and enthusiasm have helped it work.</p> <p>Support is crucial to the children coping.</p>	
Differences	
<p>The nurture group teacher approach, experience and enthusiasm have helped it work.</p> <p>Support is crucial to the children coping.</p>	

Table 5.37 provides a summary of themes that emerged in relation to the role and perceptions of teachers in the process of secondary school transfer. Sample comments can be seen below.

Table 5.38: Sample comments – What Makes a Good Teacher?

Participant	Sample comments made during interviews
Children	<i>"It is more strict, get told off more".</i> <i>"I feel settled in straight away, a bit exciting and then a bit boring, changes in different lessons and the teachers change strictness".</i> <i>"Teachers giving help when you are stuck with the work".</i> <i>"More help off the teacher".</i> <i>"The teachers are helpful, more fun lessons".</i>
Wider school staff	<i>"There is a training issues for all staff, how to handle children with difficulties, having a range of strategies and to know the children and differentiate for them. We could learn from nurture group activities, from seeing it."</i>

Teachers within the nurture group were highlighted by children and parents as providing a supportive role. The enthusiasm of the teacher for this part of the timetabled week was noted as being important to the success of the process and had this been extended other difficulties with students may not have arisen. Having had experience as a primary teacher appeared to be a factor that had helped with this and parents felt the teaching within the nurture group was supportive. Children noted that overall teachers could be more strict, and having to get used to different styles of teachers was difficult for them. Staff highlighted that not all staff within school had the skills to meet the needs of vulnerable students.

Table 5.39: The Learning Experience – themes reviewed

Pupils	
Positive comments	Negative comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different / good lesson</li> <li>• New challenges</li> <li>• Circle Time</li> <li>• The Link (nurture group)</li> <li>• Being in a small group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having homework</li> <li>• Some bad lessons</li> <li>• Having difficult work</li> </ul>

Nurture group staff	
Positive comments	Negative comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Circle Time has worked well</li> <li>• Behaviour better in the nurture group than mainstream classes</li> <li>• Flexibility of support available</li> <li>• A Dyslexia diagnosis was possible quickly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timetabling difficulties – not as consistent as would have liked, not the same staff possible at all times</li> </ul>
Other school staff	
Positive comments	Negative comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The nurture group provided flexibility and a range of differentiation for students</li> <li>• Been able to identify and support a range of SEN</li> <li>• Small group has made it comfortable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A lot of good work will be lost when the nurture group ends</li> <li>• There are training issues for all staff regarding how to work with children with difficulties</li> </ul>
Parents	
Positive comments	Negative comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have seen progress in handwriting</li> <li>• Good reports from teachers</li> <li>• He has coped with having more teachers</li> <li>• There has been better support for SEN in the nurture group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing concerns about learning needs</li> <li>• He needs support in Year 8. Ongoing SEN</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Common themes</u></p> <p>The nurture group has provided good support for learning needs and provided opportunity to identify and address needs quickly.</p> <p>Flexibility of support has been available,</p> <p>Circle Time valued.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Differences</u></p> <p>The need for ongoing support for SEN identified by parents, staff highlighted the need for wider staff training to do this.</p> <p>Homework identified by pupils, only.</p>	

The learning experience theme, as summarised in Table 5.40, pertains to how children coped with the change of lesson and the ways in which they learn in secondary school. Comments made included:

Table 5.40: Sample comments – The Learning Experience

Participant	Sample comments made during interviews
Children	<i>"I don't like the timetable because you get double lessons".</i>

	<i>"It has been different, less writing which is good. The classroom and smaller size of the group is much less than the other lessons. Not sure if it better really".</i> <i>"Doing a group with this lovely teacher and have been talking and thinking and feelings"</i>
Nurture group staff	<i>"We have been able to pick up on other issues, for example one child not eating their dinner and another toilet problem".</i> <i>"One particular child in care is talking and joining in more about his feeling and home situation".</i>

Students seemed to like the changes and in particular commented upon activities that took place within the nurture group, such as circle time.

The flexibility provided by teaching for part of the school week via the nurture group was seen as a positive. This also allowed for additional way of meeting special educational needs. Parents noted progress in some basic skills over this time and felt children with needs were being supported.

Children found increased homework and particular lessons more challenging. Training needs amongst the wider teaching staff for working with such children were identified. Parents expressed their ongoing concerns about meeting their children's needs in school.

Table 5.41: Feeling Lost – themes reviewed

Pupils	
Positive comments	Negative comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extra visits helped</li> <li>• Having family there helped</li> <li>• Having a 'safe place' at break and lunchtimes, like the computer room, is good</li> <li>• The Link has been good</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worried about getting lost</li> </ul>
Nurture group staff	
Positive comments	Negative comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Links to tutor groups and main lesson have been good</li> <li>• Being in the nurture group has made them feel special</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>
Other school staff	
Positive comments	Negative comments

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The mobile being separate has been a 'bolt hole'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>
Parents	
Positive comments	Negative comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have coped/settled better than I thought</li> <li>He is a sensitive, emotional child so needs to know he can go to people for support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Common themes</u></p> <p>Having a 'bolt hole' / 'safe place' was recognised as important but children and staff.</p> <p>Time spent in the nurture group was seen as important and a positive experience. It made the pupils in there feel safe / special.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Differences</u></p> <p>Worried about getting lost mainly came from children rather than adults.</p> <p>Parents thought that children had coped better than thought.</p>	

Table 5.41 provides a summary of information from interviews and questionnaires that fit the theme 'Feeling Lost'. Comments included:

Table 5.42: Sample comments – Feeling Lost

Participant	Sample comments made during interviews
Children	<p><i>"Going to Mobile 2 was good". (nurture room)</i></p> <p><i>"We did a visit to the school and talk to me new friends".</i></p> <p><i>"Come to the school for two days and saw out teacher"</i></p>

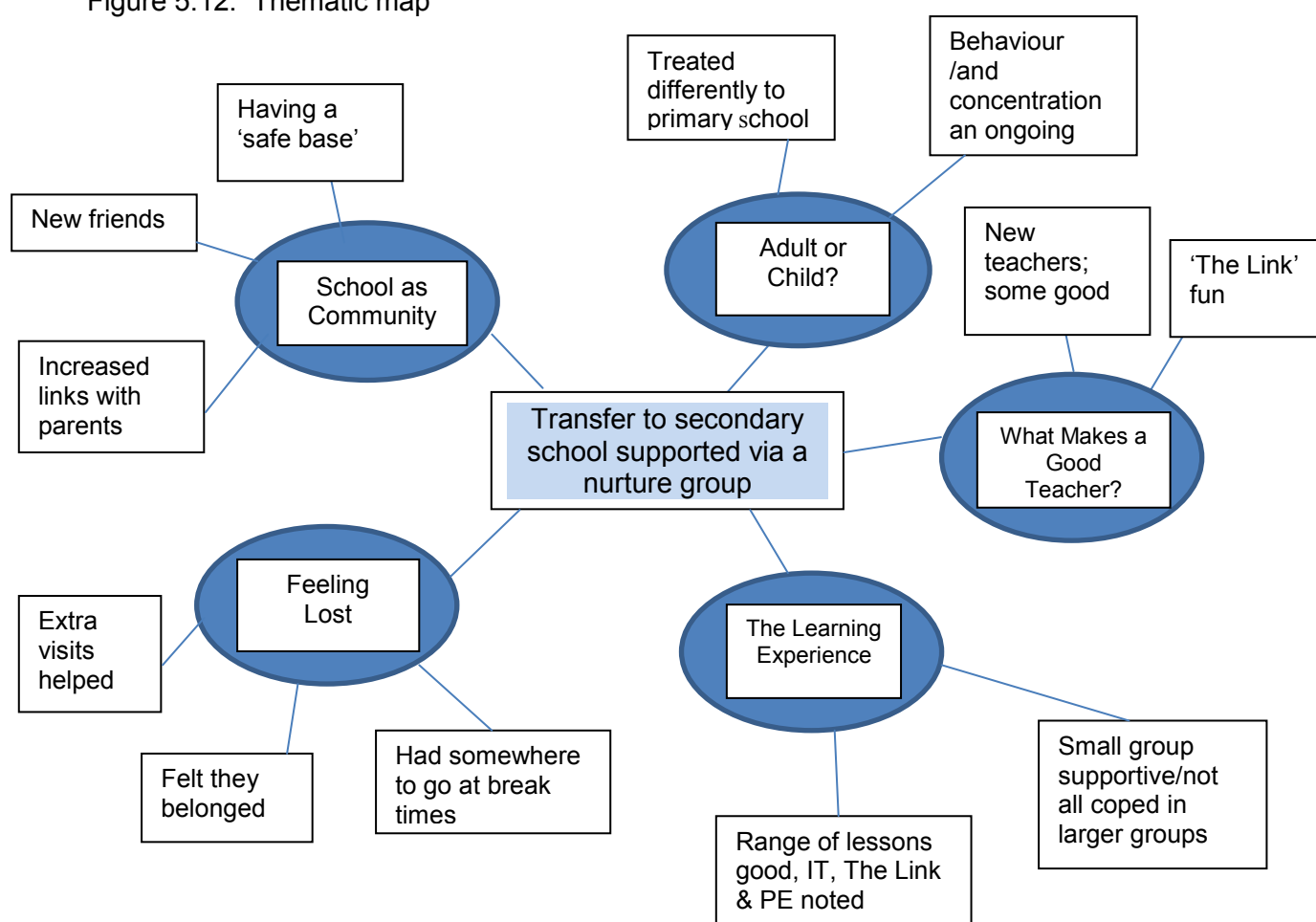
The majority of comments in relation to this appeared to be positive, staff and parents felt that the children had coped better with the larger school environment that they had originally thought. Extra visits had helped and the children appreciated the 'safe place' that the nurture group provided them with.

#### Phase 4: Defining and Naming the Themes

As this study uses deductive thematic analysis the themes were linked to the five found by Tobbell (2003). The only statement made that could not be accommodated within the five

themes (as identified above), was in relation to Sports Day, which at that time was a particular concerns although not an ongoing issues within school. The thematic map below provides an overview of the key themes identified.

Figure 5.12: Thematic map



### 5.3.3 Changes in participant views over time

Students and staff directly involved in the nurture group were interviewed and completed questionnaires at the start and end of Year 7. This provided an opportunity for specific themes to be identified from these participants and highlight changes over time in these

views that emerged. Table 5.35 provides a summary of issues that arose over time from children's perspectives.

Table 5.43: Changes in children's views over time

<b>Theme</b>	<b><i>Mentioned only at the start of Y7</i></b>	<b><i>Mentioned only at the end of Y7</i></b>
<b>School as community</b>	Bullying is better supported at high school. Support of family members there has helped. The Link is not fair on others who don't go there.	Thought Y11s would beat us up. Worried about the bigger kids.
<b>Adult or child?</b>	Teachers talked to us like a baby at primary, more like an adult now. They treat you like an adult 100% treated differently.	
<b>What makes a good Teacher?</b>	Going to The Link made it easier. Some Teachers are strict. Some new Teachers are strict but make you learn.	One Teacher named as not being nice. Teachers are nice at secondary. One Teacher named as being nice.
<b>The learning experience</b>	I hate this school. Liked the time in The Link; it's more fun lessons than primary. Like snack time, music, playing games and Circle Time.	The Link time has helped us.
<b>Feeling lost</b>	Kept getting lost on the first day. It was a big step moving to different lessons. It's a big school.	Going to the mobile (The Link) made it easier.

The only consistently mentioned factor was that the children had enjoyed being in the nurture group (The Link). At the start of the academic year there were increased comments about what they found supportive, being treated differently by staff and coping with different teaching styles. Coping with a larger environment and new places to go were important. By the end of the year there were fewer concerns raised by children in the group and, a number of concerns had diminished over time or them. On reflection children thought that they may

get beaten up by older students, which had not been previously alluded to. Teachers overall were mentioned if they were nice at the end of the year.

Table 5.44 provides information regarding changes over time from the perspectives of staff directly involved with the nurture group. Staff were asked in addition to comment upon how the children were coping as they moved into Year 8. This took place via a group discussion using open interview questions with the Special Educational needs Coordinator, who oversaw the direct line management of the group, the nurture group teacher and the TA who worked with the group on a daily basis.

Table 5.44: Changes in staff's views over time

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Things mentioned as having changed with the group over time</b>
<b>School as community</b>	Relationships between children improved over the time in the nurture group. Staff consistency has been key. One child with ASD has increasingly had problems socially in the wider school. TA support going with some into Y8, which is needed. SEN staff links to the group has strengthened.
<b>Adult or child?</b>	Care issues are ongoing for some, still need nurturing. Immature/silly disruptive behaviour got worse in the large classes for some of the boys. Confidence has improved noticeably with some/more independent.
<b>What makes a good Teacher?</b>	English/DT lessons are problematic and this is ongoing for a number of children from the nurture group. Differences seen in behaviour /engagement by the TA in different lessons depending upon the style/classroom management of different Teachers.
<b>The learning experience</b>	Progress seen in terms of attainment, especially in Maths. Deterioration in behaviour and engagement in learning in mainstream classes, especially at the end of Y7 when the nurture group was reduced.
<b>Feeling lost</b>	The locality of the nurture group initially seen as a negative as it was separate from the main school but this over time was seen as a positive as it provide a 'safe haven'. Links increased between SEN Department and the nurture group which has helped children as they now access support from a wider range of staff who are familiar to them. Still a number of children who seem 'lost' at times mainstream school and need support to cope in a large school.

The nurture group ('The Link') is consistently mentioned over the course of Year 7 as a supportive and enjoyable part of the pupils' school experiences. Concerns regarding bullying do continue and one patricianly teacher is identified as not being nice at the end of the year,



whereas there were more general concerns at the start of Year It would appear that overall the students are more confident regarding teachers in general as they have progressed through Year 7.

Staff noted the differences in the children who have attend the nurture group over the course of Year 7. Relationships with staff and their peers are noted to have been important, as identified by Tobbell (2003). Ongoing need is evident; the children shall need continued support into Year 8. Concern with how some pupils are coping with reintegration at the end of Year 7 is evident; behaviour in some lessons is problematic. It is notable that some students are finding it particularly teachers, and their teaching style, more difficult to engage with. The nurture group continues to be seen as a positive by the children; it appeared to provide a 'safe haven' for them, particularly as it was slightly detached from the main school building, which initially had been a concern for staff.

Whilst it is apparent that staff felt that there were many positive aspects to the group in meeting student needs, contributing to improved academic attainment in Maths and improved confidence, more negative aspects emerged as the children entered Year 8 without this support. Staff noted that there were still a number of children who continued to need the kind of support which the nurture group had offered. Differences were apparent, over time, in the student's ability to cope in different classroom contexts. In the wider school context staff mentioned that links between the SEN staff and students who had attended the group were improved as a result of the nurture group in Year 7 and the TA was able to continue with some consistent support into Year 8.

## **5.5 Discussion of qualitative findings in relation to the research questions**

- *What impact does being in the Year 7 nurture group have on young peoples' social and emotional skill development?*

Students who attended the nurture group, staff and parents all commented positively about the opportunity the smaller group environment provided for making friendships. This links with Sanders (2007), whose research into nurture groups demonstrated that staff reported increased student engagement socially, in and outside of the nurture group. In this study parents also noted increased socialisation in and outside of school. Staff noted that they were able to get to know these more vulnerable students better and to offer increased social and emotional support as a result. Tobell's (2003) study highlighted the importance of relationships to support transfer; this would seem to be the case within this study. All participants over time have provided information regarding the importance of friendships at transfer and relationships between students and staff and staff within school have been highlighted as important for success.

The qualitative findings tie in with Boxall Profile (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998) scores (section 5.1.4); most pupils who attended the group demonstrating progress on developmental strands, as measured by the Boxall Profile, over Year 7. Cooke et al. (2008) data, of a secondary school nurture group demonstrated clear improvements in this area and case study evidence showed an increase in willingness to engage in school life having attended to the nurture group. It would appear that for most students their experience of the nurture group had facilitated engagement in school socially; however re-integration was more problematic for a small number of the group, as evidenced by behavioural problems. Doyle (2001) recognised the difficulties of re-integration following time in a nurture group and identify specific target areas for support at this time, a similar approach may have been beneficial within this study.

- *What impact does participation in the nurture group have on the young people's academic performance?*

Smaller group teaching for a number of key subjects would appear to have been a positive experience for most students. In particular it was to the more fun aspects of the group, such as playing games and having snacks, that positive comments tended to relate to. Bryan and Treanor (2007) had found that use of small group intervention, using primary trained teaching staff, demonstrated positive academic achievement. Staff perceptions also reflected that it was thought students had benefitted as a result of literacy and numeracy lessons with a primary trained teacher post-transfer. This study would seem to demonstrate the same, both in terms of reading and maths levels (Section 5.1.1) but as also in terms of perceptions of staff and parents on pupil engagement and progress with learning.

The challenges of other lessons, such as more strict teachers and increased homework, were alluded to in more negative ways by some (as also found by Atkinson, 2006), although there were comments regarding enjoying the challenge of these subjects by one student. The TA noted that some students appeared not to cope well in larger lessons and behaviour was more of a problem in these setting as compared to the nurture group. Another student gave consistently negative comment regarding being at secondary school, not liking anything about it. This would suggest that despite the intervention of a nurture groups, there are still a small number of students who do not cope at secondary school. Galton et al. (1999) stated that 40% of pupils do not sustain progress post-transfer, this study would seem to suggest a fewer number fail to make progress, although not all.

- *Has being in a nurture group setting for part of their time in Year 7 been helpful in the process of transfer to secondary school as perceived by the students?*

Overall students, staff and parents involved all gave positive feedback from using the nurture group to support transfer. In particular the links possible between parents and staff and being within a small group would appear to have enabled the process of transfer to be somewhat protected and allowed for the students to make attachments with staff within the nurture group, from which to go out into the wider school context (Bowlby, 1969). This 'primary' ethos approach to transfer has similar findings to other studies that have taken this approach (Sainsbury et al., 1998; Hodson et al., 2005; Bryan and Treanor, 2007; Lunham, 2009) where benefits have been noted by pupils themselves as well as staff within schools.

- *Do staff directly involved in the nurture group think it has provided an effective way of supporting vulnerable Year 7 students?*

The teacher, TA and SENCo all considered this a useful support mechanism. It was highlighted that a number of difficulties students were having were able to be identified and supported quickly, which may not have happened in the wider school context. Links with The Special Educational Needs Department were increased with these students enabling additional understanding and support. Hodson et al. (2005) had noted the need for this; the nurture group approach would appear to have effectively achieved this. Iszatt and Wasilewska (1997) used SEN data to measure the effects of a nurture group and found that children were less likely to need, high level, ongoing support for SEN having attended a nurture group.

Information provided by staff at the end of Year 7 and into Year 8, with an increase in behavioural and social difficulties can be seen for some members of the group, would suggest that the nurture group had provided an element of protection and the difficulties were increasing due to adaptation at re-integration. Bailey and Baines (2012) found that high levels of resilience factors within primary school may leave those with SEN more vulnerable at transfer. The nurture group approach provided additional support in mainstream, provided

for the first two terms of Year 7 may have extended this resilience factor. However, for a number of children they appeared to have re-integrated well. The Pastoral Coordinator noted that if the students had been within the group for the whole of their Year 7 curriculum then they would have coped without difficulty.

- *Which aspects of the intervention are considered to have contributed to/militated against providing effective support to Year 7 pupils?*

Consistency of staff and support were identified by all staff involved as being crucial. The children also commented upon having the TA to support them in wider lessons. This became increasingly important towards the end of the year with increased re-integration into mainstream lessons. Cooke et al. (2008), when setting up a secondary school nurture group, noted the importance of consistency of staff in order to provide secure attachments with the young people.

The smaller group setting was noted by parents as being important and supportive, this links with much of the research into effective support for transfer. As far back as 1974, Dutch and McCall found that a smaller transition department at transfer demonstrated pupils were better adjusted in social and emotional domains. Nurture group research have also identified the importance of working with parents, which in this case both staff and parents thought that the nurture group had helped to facilitate this (Taylor and Gulliford, 2011). Staff directly involved in the nurture group expressed positive views regarding the credentials of specific staff working in there were important to the relationships made with the children. Relationships were key in terms of children with children, staff with children, staff with wider school staff and staff with parents. The nurture group approach appeared to help facilitate all of these.

Links with wider schools staff were not always seen as consistent and could prove less beneficial to the pupils. Colley (2011) notes that when using a nurture group as a secondary

school support intervention, mainstream staff having access to the nurture group can influence the way in which staff manage social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. If this intervention had been more long-term there may have been further opportunity to develop links. However, the most notable militating factor identified by staff was the rushed, not fully planned, re-integration in the third term of Year 7 demonstrated difficulties for a number of youngsters.

## CHAPTER 6: CASE EXAMPLES

### 6. Purpose and data collection

Additional data were gathered for four pupils supported by the nurture group to provide a more detailed picture of the experiences of these four students in Year 7 in relation to research questions. Table 6.1 provides an outline of the data collection for each student. The data sources shaded are additional to those utilised for all pupils who attended the nurture group.

Table 6.1: Case example data sources

<b><i>Information obtained</i></b>	<b><i>Sources of data / Method of data collection</i></b>
Quantitative data; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEN data</li> <li>• pupil attendance information</li> <li>• behaviour profile</li> <li>• reading and maths scores</li> <li>• Boxall Profiles</li> <li>• 'Myself as a Learner' scale</li> </ul>	Quantitative measures; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• information on school SEN Register/school records</li> <li>• school attendance registers</li> <li>• school electronic log of reported incident of inappropriate behaviour</li> <li>• initial and end of Year 7 assessment</li> <li>• completed in Year 6 and after the first half term and end of Year 7</li> <li>• completion of self-rating questionnaire at the start and end of Year 7</li> </ul>
Qualitative data; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• additional information regarding pupil needs</li> <li>• individual pupil perceptions at the end of Year 7</li> <li>• parental perceptions at the end of Year 7</li> <li>• staff perceptions at the end of Year 7</li> </ul>	Qualitative methods; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• discussion with SENCo to share information from school files regarding SEN</li> <li>• individual pupil semi-structured interviews</li> <li>• individual parental semi-structured interviews</li> <li>• semi-structured interview/discussion jointly with the SENCo, Teacher and TA</li> </ul>

Sample transcripts of discussions with nurture group staff are included in Appendix 31; discussion with parents in Appendices 21-25 and with the pupils in Appendices 17-20. Students are represented by initials.

Table 6.2 provides a brief summary profile all ten children that attended the nurture group (as shown in Chapter 4, Table 4.1), with the four case study pupils highlighted in this instance.

Table 6.2: Summary of children that attended the nurture group

Pupil	Summary of reasons given for accessing nurture group intervention in Year 7
AD	A Looked After Child who had experienced recent changes in his care placement. AD was reported as having learning difficulties and low-level disruptive behaviour an increasing concern in Year 6.
MH	Learning difficulties identified across the curriculum, with some immature behaviour reported.
PH	Learning difficulties identified in literacy and numeracy. There had been reported concerns regarding bullying, with PH being the victim, in primary school.
BJ	Moved from a neighbouring authority in Year 5. BH was noted as being behind with his learning but also having some emotional difficulties and needing a high level of support.
AC	Behaviour, learning and language skills were significant concerns, as identified by key primary school staff. AC's father had recently passed away and the family had moved house pre-transfer.
RM	There were some learning difficulties identified with RM. However, the main reason for his inclusion in the group appeared to be due to him being Diabetic, which primary school staff thought would make him vulnerable at secondary school.
PJP	Low academic attainment; accompanied with very poor attendance were the main areas of concern cited by primary school staff for PJP.
KWI	KWI had diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder, a Statement of Special Educational Needs and individual adult support was allocated to her.
KWO	General learning difficulties and poorly developed social and emotional skills were identified as making KWO likely to be vulnerable to transfer.



## 6.1 Case Example 1: BJ

### 6.1.1 What was known about BJ on entry to secondary school and why he was selected for the nurture group

Information from primary school was limited regarding BJ due him having moved in Year 6 from a different Local Authority school. BJ was male and 11 years, 4 months old on entry to Year 7. Records show his ethnicity as White/UK. BJ received additional support for learning at School Action Plus of the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001). He was selected for the nurture group due to a combination of him not having been with his Year 6 peer group long prior to transfer, his learning and self-organisational skill needs.

### 6.1.2 The impact of attending a nurture group to support transfer on BJ's social and emotional development

BJ's social, emotional and behavioural development was measured by staff three times from the end of Year 6 to the end of Year 7 using the Boxall Profile (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998). Measures of developmental and diagnostic profile areas for BJ over this time are shown in the following histograms.

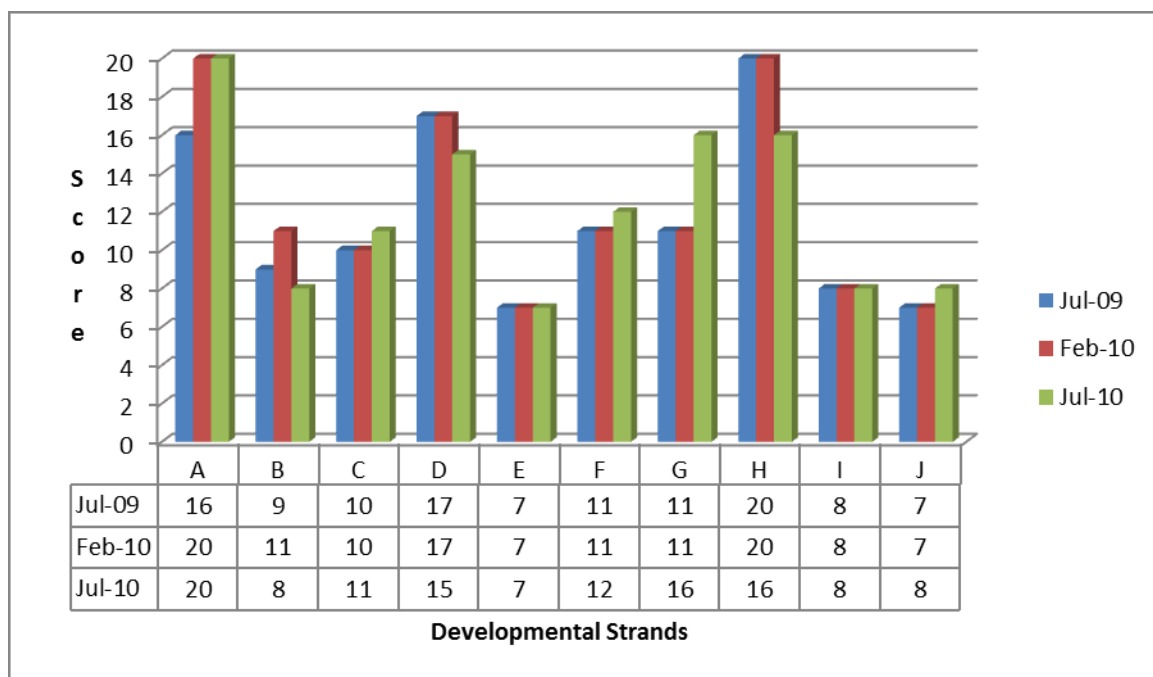
Table 6.3: Strands and sub-strands of the Boxall Profile

Section I: Developmental Strands
<b>Main strand: Organisation of experience</b> A – Gives purposeful attention B – Participates constructively C – Connects up experiences D – Shows insightful involvement E – Engages cognitively with peers
<b>Main strand: Internalisation of controls</b> F – Is emotionally secure G – Is biddable and accepts constraints H – Accommodates to others I – Responds constructively to others J – Maintains internalised standards
Section II: Diagnostic Profile
<b>Main strand: Self-limiting features</b>

Q – Disengaged
R – Self-negating
<b>Main strand: Undeveloped behaviour</b>
S – Makes undifferentiated attachments
T – Shows inconsequential behaviour
U – Craves attachment, reassurance
<b>Main Strand: Unsupported Development</b>
V – Avoids/rejects attachment
W – Has undeveloped/insecure sense of self
X – Shows negativism towards self
Y – Shows negativism towards others
Z – Wants, grabs, disregarding others

(Bennathan and Boxall, 1998)

Figure 6.1: Histogram of Boxall Profile data for BJ; Developmental Strands



Progress can be seen in five areas on this measure of BJ's social and emotional development.

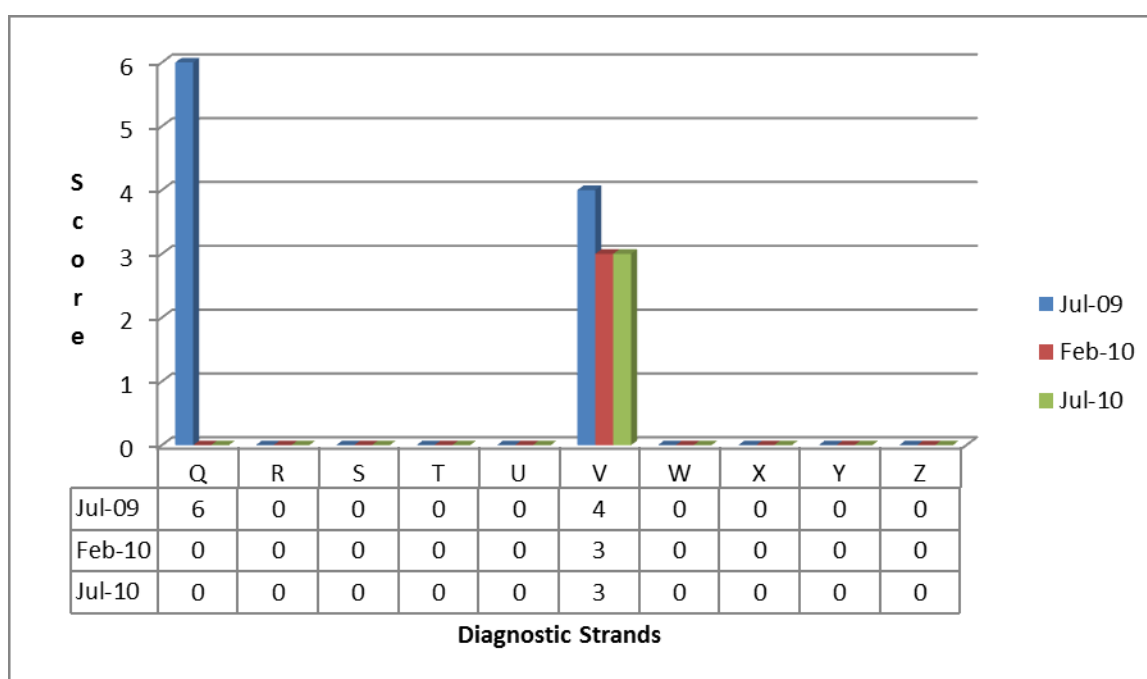
Table 6.4: Boxall Profile progress – BJ Developmental Strands

	Criterion	Skill Area
Demonstrates progress	A C F G J	Gives purposeful attention Connects up experiences Is emotionally secure Is biddable and accepts constraints Maintains internalised standards
Initial progress, not sustained	B	Participates constructively

Deterioration demonstrated	D H	Shows insightful involvement Accommodates to others
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Progress not sustained by the end of Year 7 was possibly as a result of the re-integration into mainstream lessons. Most other areas measured remained constant from Year 6 to the end of Year 7.

Figure 6.2: Histogram of Boxall Profile data for BJ; Diagnostic Profile



BJ demonstrated few difficulties in terms of the diagnostic elements of the Boxall Profile. It would appear that he made significant progress in two areas.

Table 6.5: Boxall Profile progress – BJ Diagnostic Strands

	Strand	Skill Area
Demonstrates progress	Q V	Disengaged Avoids/rejects attachment

Overall, Boxall Profile data suggested that BJ initially made progress in most developmental areas rated by the Boxall Profile. Progress in areas of the diagnostic profile suggest that his

time in the nurture group may have helped BJ to make positive attachments post-transfer and engage better in learning.

Table 6.6: Key interview comments – BJ’s social, emotional and behavioural development

	<b><i>Example comments made during individual interviews:</i></b>
<b>Pupil</b>	<i>“I can go in the computer room and canteen with friends”. “I have got friends in The Link”.</i>
<b>Parent</b>	<i>“As far as I know he has made friends; he calls for someone before school which he wouldn’t before”. “He has coped very well; better than I thought”. “He is a bit more outspoken now, come out of his shell a bit more; not loads but it is a big achievement for him”. “BJ is talking about school, he never used to”. “Concentration can still be a problem (for BJ) but there were no other worries”.</i>
<b>Nurture group staff</b>	<i>“He seems to have developed more confidence throughout Year 7 and joined in well in the The Link”. “It seemed that in the smaller group BJ was able to make friends in a ‘safe’ environment”. “He is popular in the group, one of the lads”. “... appears to have gained confidence from being in The Link”. “He now has children have now got to know him and made friends”.</i>

Staff noted that BJ appeared to have coped well socially within the nurture group and they were able to offer additional emotional support when needed. The SENCo explained that there had been eating issues regarding BJ at school, he would not eat at first in school, but after a time grew in confidence and did go to the canteen for his dinner some days.

Comments made by staff and BJ’s mother were all positive in terms of his experience of transfer and, in particular, support via the nurture group. However, by comparison Boxall Profile scores do not reflect this to the extent you may expect. School behaviour records showed that there was one incident recorded of ‘defiance’ for BJ. Staff commented that they were surprised at this, it seemed out of character. BJ’s own view of the social aspects of

school demonstrated that he had made new friends and had valued having a 'safe place' to go.

### 6.1.3 The impact of attending a nurture group to support transfer on BJ's academic development

Initial records showed that BJ had received additional support at primary school for his learning. It was noted early on by staff that BJ appeared to lack confidence in his learning abilities. The following table provides some evidence of his level of working in reading and basic mathematical skills. It should be noted that this data is problematic due to the use of age equivalent scores and change of assessment tools used by the school (as discussed in Chapter 4, Section 4.3.5).

Table 6.7: Reading and mathematics data for BJ

<i>Measure</i>	<i>Start of Year 7</i>	<i>End of Year 7</i>	<i>Comment</i>
Reading Age	absent	6:02	Below chronological age.
Mathematics Age	8:09	9:05	8 months progress. Below chronological age.

BJ's age equivalent scores provide learning skills BJ had made 8 months progress in Maths over the ten month nurture group intervention, which whilst below expected gain level would suggest that his progress in maths exceeds that in previous years. His reading and Maths age equivalent scores remained below the level expected of a Year 7 student.

Despite his difficulties with learning BJ tried hard in lessons and was perceived to be making progress, as shown in Table 6.8.

Table 6.8: Key interview comments – BJ's academic development

	<i>Example comments made during individual interviews:</i>
Pupil	<i>"Some of the new lessons are good".</i> <i>"I don't like the timetable because you get double lessons".</i> <i>"Some of the work has been hard".</i> <i>"The Link, is just a fun lesson that I like; it helps cooperate and stuff".</i> <i>"(The Link)It is different – better and it's more fun than the other lessons".</i> <i>"It is gonna be different (Year 8) because we might not have nurture; one of my favourite lessons".</i>
Parent	<i>"The smaller nurture group has helped him".</i> <i>"BJ is not very good with homework, it is a struggle".</i>
Nurture group staff	<i>"In all lessons the feedback was positive from staff regarding BJ and his engagement in work".</i>

BJ's own rating of his learning, supported via the nurture group, on 'Myself As A Learner' (Burden, 1998), as explained in Chapter 4, Section 4.3.5, ratings at the start and end of Year 7 were as follows in Table 6.9.

Table 6.9: 'Myself as a Learner' scale standardised scores

Score Oct'09	Range	Score July'10	Range	Difference
56	low	57	Below average	+1 point

This would suggest that BJ's self-perceptions as a learner had remained consistent throughout Year 7, despite the move toward re-integration by the time the second rating was completed, which would suggest that he was coping in mainstream lessons as well as within nurture group lessons. BJ's comments suggest that he was mostly coping in school by the end of Year 7, although recognised the support and difference of the nurture group, and that it was going to end.

6.1.4 Has being in a nurture group for part of Year 7 been helpful to BJ in the process of transfer?

BJ's attendance at school was consistently good, at 95.6% over Year 7. School records showed that he had received a high number of merits throughout the year, from a range of teaching staff.

Nurture group staff explained that they thought it had been beneficial to get to know BJ in the smaller nurture group. The approach had enabled some of his self-help needs that may have otherwise been missed, to be addressed. An increased in BJ's confidence was evident over Year 7.

Table 6.10: Key interview comments – BJ's nurture group experience

	<i>Example comments made during individual interviews:</i>
Pupil	<i>"It has been ok, overall about a 5 (out of 10)." "I do feel safe in school". "Not worry, you do good stuff like fun lessons like Science".</i>
Parent	<i>"BJ would not have coped in the big groups at first". "There have been days when he has not wanted to come, only the odd days, overall I am very impressed with him".</i>
Nurture group staff	<i>"Being in the smaller group BJ has been able to make friends in a safe environment; he could have been vulnerable and 'picked on' ". "BJ's confidence has grown; he now has school dinners some days".</i>

BJ's mother could also see the impact the nurture group appeared to have in BJ's confidence and coping at school. Adults suggest that BJ had benefitted from the support of the nurture and to have grown in confidence post-transfer. Staff thought that BJ presented as a vulnerable so the protective, smaller group, enabled him to establish friendships in a safer

environment. His mother was keen for him to still know where he would be able to access support in Year 8.

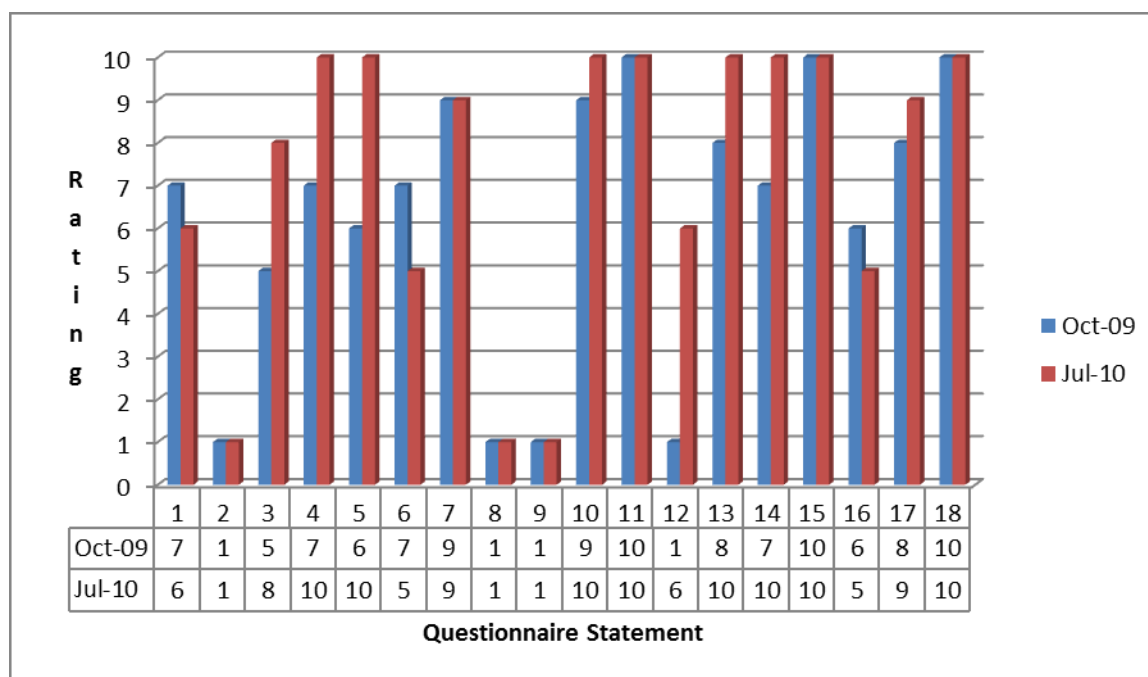
BJ's 'My New School' questionnaire ratings also reflect this positivity, as seen in the histogram below and in the additional comments that he made on the questionnaire. BJ's responses to this questionnaire over the course of Year 7 are demonstrated below. Table 6.11 provides a summary of the statements on the 'My New School' questionnaire, for ease of reference.

Table 6.11: Statements on 'My New School' questionnaire

<b>Number</b>	<b><i>Rated statement</i></b>
1	I feel that I belong at my new school.
2	Teachers treat me like a child.
3	Teachers teach in a different way to my primary teachers.
4	I know where my classrooms are.
5	The work we have now is completely new.
6	The teachers know me in school.
7	I am confident walking around the school.
8	The work we have done so far in Year 7 is similar to that in primary school.
9	Changing schools has been really hard.
10	I have a group of friends in school.
11	I understand what the teachers want me to do.
12	Having different teaches for lessons is good.
13	I can do the work in lessons.
14	I can ask the teachers if I need help.
15	I enjoy lessons in The Link.
16	I enjoy other lessons in school.
17	Teachers treat me like an adult.
18	Overall, I think I have settled into my new school.



Figure 6.3: Histogram of BJ's 'My New School' questionnaire ratings



The response profile illustrates that BJ's perceptions over the course of Year 7 had improved in a number of areas, including; being taught in a different way to at primary school; having completely different work; and being able to ask the teacher for help. This would tie in with observations of his mother and staff regarding BJ's increased confidence. Less improvement can be seen in; BJ's sense of belonging at school; the teachers knowing him in school; and enjoying other lessons (not in the nurture group). This may be a reflection of the process of re-integration that BJ would have been experiencing by the end of Year 7.

Table 6.12: BJ's 'My New School' questionnaire comments

'My New School' Questionnaire	Summary of additional comments:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BJ noted that he had been looking forward to moving schools because it is better than his primary school.</li> <li>• To help him prepare for the move he got used to hard work but it was hard getting used to moving around school.</li> <li>• BJ thought that meeting new students had been good and getting support off teachers had helped.</li> <li>• Overall BJ had enjoyed being at secondary and especially enjoyed PE lessons.</li> <li>• At the end of Year 7 BJ had thought that by not thinking about had helped prepare him for the move and getting used to, it had been</li> </ul>

	<p><i>hard.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>He noted that secondary school was better than primary and visiting the school had made it easier to start there. After a year at the school BJ had enjoyed it.</i></li> </ul>
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Individual interview data echoed the views of adults regarding his experiences of transfer supported by the nurture group. He had enjoyed his time in the group; he also noted that it was important for him to have safe places to go to.

#### 6.1.5 Summary of BJ in Year 7 supported by the nurture group

BJ had consistently good attendance throughout Year 7, averaging at 95.6%. He had been absent on the day of Parents Evening, which staff thought might have not been coincidental. His general self-concept as a learner remained low but slightly improved over Year 7 and he had made academic progress. Behaviour was not a concern with BJ, although his mother was keen to know that he was going to receive ongoing support to help with coping at secondary school and to help improve concentration. The nurture group would appear to have been able to provide a gradual transitional process for BJ, in which he had been able to adapt more slowly to life in secondary school, for example getting used to the canteen and coping with self-organisation skills. Links with his mother and staff provided a close network of support for BJ. His mother highlighted the need for BJ to know who he can go to for help, the nurture group provided this 'safe base' (Bowlby, 1969) and by the end of Year 7 it appeared as though he was ready to be more independent.

## 6.2 Case Example 2: AC

### 6.2.1 What was known about AC on entry to secondary school and why he was selected for the nurture group

AC was a male student aged 11 years, 5 months on entry to Year 7. His ethnicity was recorded as: White/UK. AC was at School Action Plus of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) for speech and language and learning difficulties. He had received individual additional support in primary school. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) had previously been involved with supporting AC after the death of his father. Information provided by primary school staff noted that his father had died within the year prior to Year 7, it was noted that AC had not been willing to engage with support from CAMHS for this at the time. AC had an older sister in school.

AC was identified as a vulnerable young person at transfer due to his learning and language difficulties, and also the emotional problems that primary school staff had noted in relation to the death of his father, and therefore he was selected for the nurture group.

### 6.2.2 The impact of attending a nurture group to support transfer on AC's social and emotional development

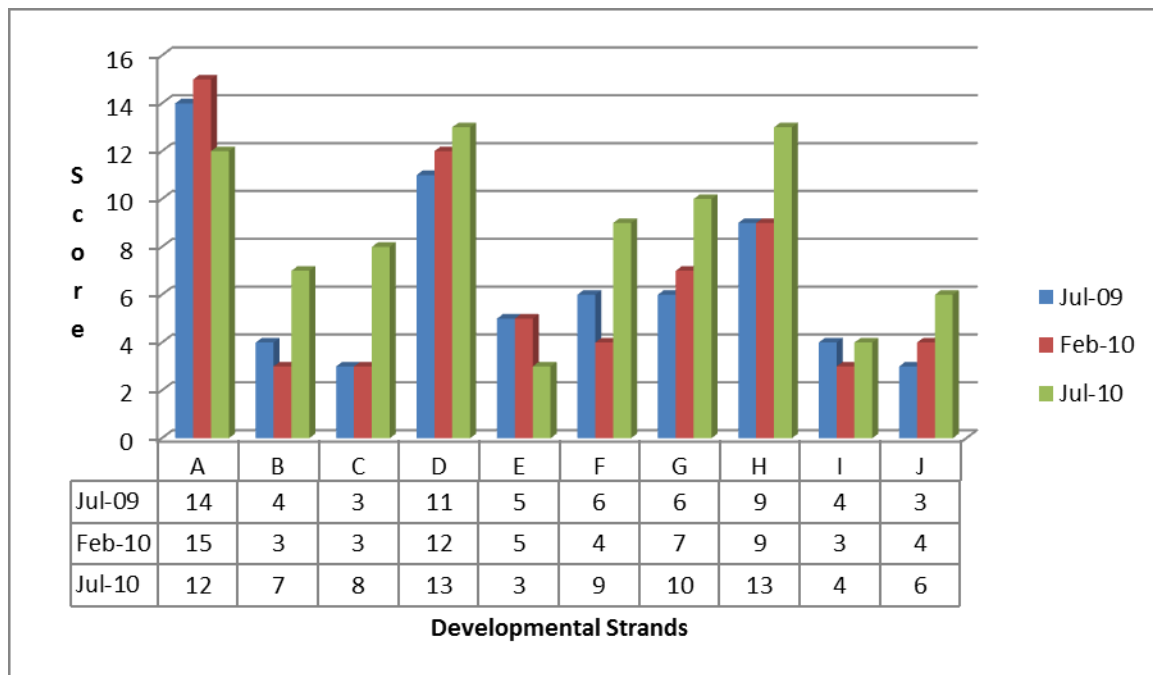
AC's social and emotional development over the course of Year 7 was explored through Boxall Profile measures (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998), as discussed in Chapter 4, Section 4.3.5, from qualitative data; discussion with staff, AC's mother and AC himself .

Table 6.13: Strands and sub-strands of the Boxall Profile

Section I: Developmental Strands
<b>Main strand: Organisation of experience</b>
A – Gives purposeful attention
B – Participates constructively

C – Connects up experiences D – Shows insightful involvement E – Engages cognitively with peers
<b>Main strand: Internalisation of controls</b> F – Is emotionally secure G – Is biddable and accepts constraints H – Accommodates to others I – Responds constructively to others J – Maintains internalised standards
<b>Section II: Diagnostic Profile</b>
<b>Main strand: Self-limiting features</b> Q – Disengaged R – Self-negating
<b>Main strand: Undeveloped behaviour</b> S – Makes undifferentiated attachments T – Shows inconsequential behaviour U – Craves attachment, reassurance
<b>Main Strand: Unsupported Development</b> V – Avoids/rejects attachment W – Has undeveloped/insecure sense of self X – Shows negativism towards self Y – Shows negativism towards others Z – Wants, grabs, disregarding others

Figure 6.4: Histogram of Boxall Profile Data for AC; Developmental Strands



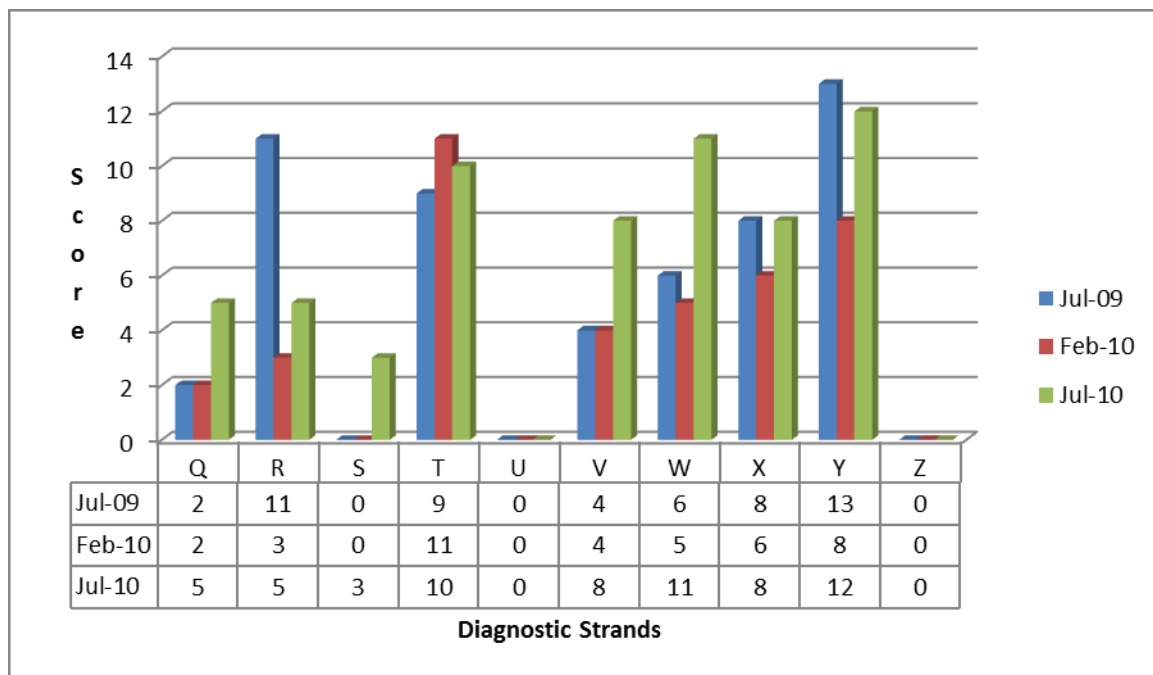
It should be noted that the Boxall Profiles were completed by staff from the nurture group in Year 7 and not wider school staff. Developmental strand data would suggest that AC had made progress in a number of social and emotional developmental areas from then end of Year 6 to the end of Year 7.

Table 6.14: Boxall Profile progress – AC Developmental Strands

	Criterion	Skill Area
Demonstrated progress	B C D F G H J	Participating constructively Connects up experiences Shows insightful involvement Is emotionally secure Is biddable and accepting constraints Accommodating to others Maintains internalised standards
No progress demonstrated	E I	Engages cognitively with peers Responds constructively to others
Deterioration demonstrated	A	Gives purposeful attention

Information provided regarding AC suggests that his reported difficulties with learning and language may have contributed to the assessed capacity to engage cognitively with other pupils, even within a small group setting. Interestingly AC made progress initially in the area of giving purposeful attention, but this progress had lessened by the end of Year 7.

Figure 6.5: Histogram of Boxall Profile Data for AC; Diagnostic Profile



Diagnostic strands of the Boxall Profile, suggest less progress over the course of Year 7 for AC (lower scores show improvement on these strands, as explained in Chapter 4, Section 4.3.5). AC demonstrated increased difficulty in six areas.

Table 6.15: Boxall Profile progress – AC Diagnostic Strands

	Criterion	Skill Area
Remained consistent	U Z	Craves attachment, reassurance Wants, grabs, disregarding others
Initial progress, not sustained	R W X Y	Self-negating Has underdeveloped/insecure sense of self Shows negativism towards others Shows negativism towards self
No progress demonstrated	Q S T	Being disengaged Making undifferentiated attachments Shows inconsequential behaviour

Initial progress (mid-way through Year 7/Feb-10 scores), when AC was spending more time within the nurture group, progress could be seen in a number of areas. Yet, when re-integrated into more mainstream lessons, this progress was not sustained, which would suggest that the nurture group had provided a protective influence for him.

Boxall Profile data link with school records of behaviour reports of disruption. There were 52 incidents of unacceptable behaviour recorded for AC, which included verbal teasing, disruption in class, refusal to participate, and behaving in a way that was considered confrontational. All of these incidents had occurred in mainstream lessons, with the majority recorded in English lessons and none within the nurture group setting.

Staff working with AC within the nurture group explained (in discussion in the July of Year 7) that initially he was reluctant to share ideas and thoughts within the group.

Table 6.16: Key interview comments – AC’s social, emotional and behavioural development

	<i>Example comments made during individual interviews:</i>
Pupil	<p><i>“Lunchtimes and break, PE is good”.</i></p> <p><i>“I have made new friends”.</i></p>
Parents	<p><i>“AC was likely to find everything hard (moving to secondary school) because of his learning difficulties”.</i></p> <p><i>“He has language problems; AC doesn’t like groups of people and is nervous in large groups”.</i></p> <p><i>“AC can’t accept when he has done something wrong, sometimes he generally doesn’t know, it was the same at primary school and he gets onto trouble”.</i></p> <p><i>“Building relationships with staff takes time. AC has trust issues”.</i></p> <p><i>“He had some friends from before; he is a quiet lad. AC now goes to school early to play with his mates at the school, which is good for him”.</i></p> <p><i>“He is now going out with his friends much more; he used to stay in his room”.</i></p>
Nurture group staff	<p><i>“He would not show his feelings at all. He did start to at one point, then not again in last few weeks. AC has been more disruptive”.</i></p> <p><i>“He is quite competitive, but sharing with one other child he is alright at. He is not so good in larger groups”.</i></p> <p><i>“He had a good relationship with the TA in the nurture group”.</i></p> <p><i>“AC hates English; one teacher in particular”.</i></p> <p><i>“He displays low level disruptive behaviours; these are ongoing. He is worse in larger group; he has managed in a smaller group”.</i></p> <p><i>“In Music there is a good teacher but he plays up. He does not want to express himself or be creative in front of others”.</i></p>

This would again suggest that AC responded better within the ‘secure base’ (Bowlby, 1969) provided by the nurture group, but as his time here reduced, he reverted back to previous, more withdrawn, behaviours. AC did make positive relationships with staff within the nurture group.

It was noticeable that AC found it more difficult to mediate the demands of mainstream lessons. This was reflected in AC’s mother’s view regarding his coping at secondary school. AC’s mother explained that he had found moving to secondary school hard, although she had seen some progress in his social skills since attending secondary school. Friendships were important to AC.

AC did not allude to any of the behaviour difficulties that he was expressing at this time in Year 7, as reported by staff. His verbal responses tended to be minimal, but the social aspect of school appeared most important to him.

### 6.2.3 The impact of attending a nurture group to support transfer on AC's academic development

AC was reported to have difficulties with learning on entry to secondary school. Both his reading and mathematics age were below the level expected of a Year 7 student. However, he had made nine months progress over the ten months of Year 7, suggesting a rate of progress which far exceed that made in preceding years, as shown in Table 6.17.

Table 6.17: Reading and mathematics data for AC

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Start of Year 7</b>	<b>End of Year 7</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Reading Age	5:05	6:02	Below chronological age. 9 months progress over 10 month period.
Mathematics Age	absent	8:09	Below chronological age.

Behaviour records for the school show that some of the negative reports he had received were for non-completion of homework. AC's self-perceptions of his learning are reflected in his ratings on the 'Myself As A Learner' Scale (Burden, 1998) at the start and end of Year 7 (as explained in Chapter 4, Section 4.3.5).

Table 6.18: 'Myself As A Learner' Scale standardised scores

Score Oct'09	Range	Score July'10	Range	Difference
59	low	60	average	+1 point

AC's self-perceptions as a learner are shown to have increased by one point over Year 7 moving him just into the average range as compared to a standardised sample of Year 7 and



8 aged students. A score below 60 represents a low-academic self-concept and a score above 82 represents a high academic self-concept (Burden, 1999). However, this shift of category reflects only a single point and cannot therefore be considered an indication of progress.

Quantitative data onto AC's attainment in Year 7 are not consistent with wider research into the academic 'dip' post-transfer (Galton et al, 1999). It would appear that despite the difficulties that AD was presenting in his behaviour by the end of Year 7, he had made progress with learning and his perceptions of himself as a learner had remained stable. It should be noted that the school measures for reading and maths are inherently problematic, as discussed in Chapter 4, Section 4.3.5; however these do provide an indication of the levels at which AC was working.

Qualitative data regarding AC's learning demonstrated ongoing concern with regard to his learning.

Table 6.19: Key interview comments – AC's academic development

	<i>Example comments made during individual interviews:</i>
Pupil	<i>"Lunchtimes and break, PE is good. The work is hard and easy".</i>
Parent	<i>"He could have done with another 12 months at primary school." "AC will still need support for learning". (In Year 8) "Teachers need to know that he does not understand".</i>
Nurture group staff	<i>"He is quite good at maths".</i>

Staff explained that AC was a pupil who might need a statutory assessment of his special educational needs (DfES 2001) as was likely need a high level of support throughout school.

It would appear that being taught within the nurture group setting had been beneficial for AC in supporting his basic learning skill development, but that he had been far less able to mediate the social or curricular demands of mainstream classes, despite access to TA support.

#### 6.2.4 Has being in a nurture group for part of Year 7 been helpful to AC in the process of transfer?

AC's attendance throughout Year 7 was 90.1%. Absences were authorised due to illness. Staff did not think that AC was reluctant to attend school.

Table 6.20: Key interview comments – AC's experience of transfer

	<i>Example comments made during individual interviews:</i>
Pupil	<i>"Overall it is ok".</i>
Parents	<i>"He has coped very well, considering he lost his Dad 12 months before and we had moved house as well. AC's friends are not local now so he has had a lot to cope with". "He went on a school trip; which surprised me". "The Link has been better; he works better, and will try. He plays up in the bigger groups because he can't cope. I appreciate the support". "He will still need support for learning. He needs as much help as he can". "He worries about change, he likes routine".</i>
Nurture group staff	<i>"Socially AC has made friends". "AC is quite popular in the group". "Building relationships with staff takes time. AC has trust issues".</i>

AC's mother thought that the nurture group had helped his transfer. Staff from the nurture group thought that AC had coped better in the smaller group, although AC would build up his frustration and 'explode' at times, which was problematic in the wider school environment. It would appear that AC was able to foster positive relationships with both staff and peers; this was particularly noted within the smaller group setting. Being taught by a primary-trained

teacher may have also contributed to his greater ability to learn, whilst adapting to a larger school setting.

The adult perspective would suggest that initially AC coped better than his mother has expected. He engaged well in the small nurture group environment and made new friends at school. Behaviour difficulties had, however increased. His mother thought that this was because he was not coping in the larger group, and this is how AC would respond. Staff explained that AC responded well to support, and AC himself expressed that he liked having support. AC said that he had liked The Link (nurture group); it had helped, as had support in classes.

Insight into AC's changing perceptions of school, over the course of Year 7, may be gained from considering his responses to the 'My New School' questionnaire, that was completed in October and July of Year 7. (Questionnaire explained in detail in Chapter 4, Section 4.3.5).

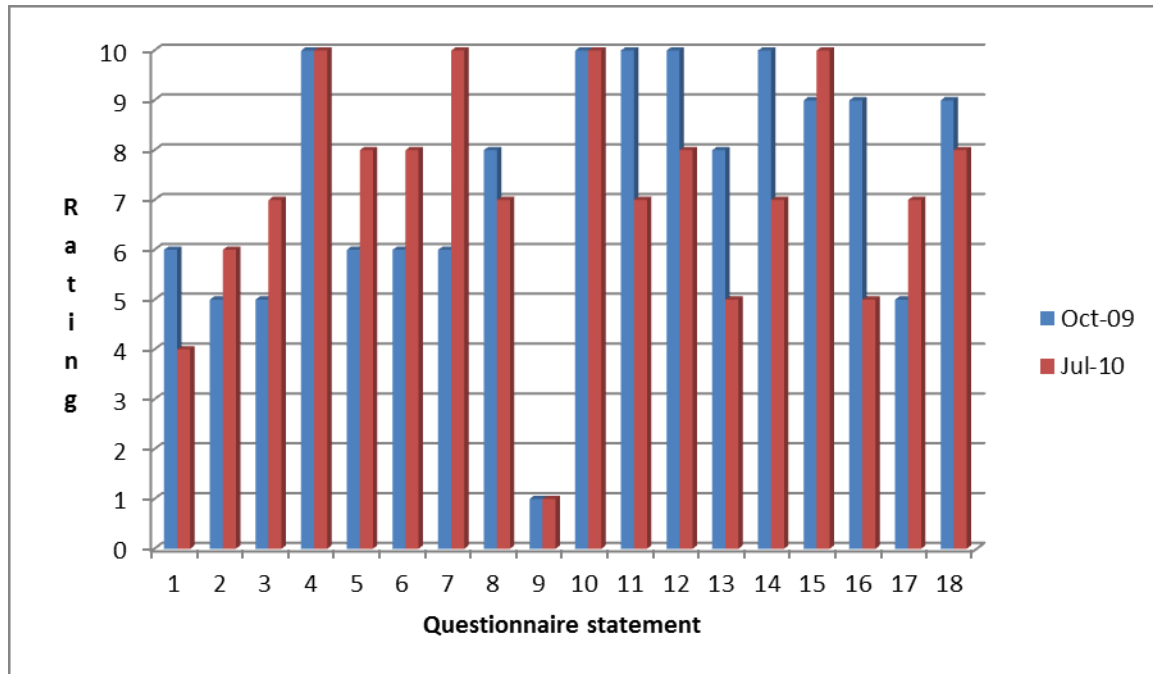
Table 6.22 provides a summary of the statements, for ease of reference.

Table 6.21: Statements on 'My New School' questionnaire

<b>Number</b>	<b>Rated statement</b>
1	I feel that I belong at my new school.
2	Teachers treat me like a child.
3	Teachers teach in a different way to my primary teachers.
4	I know where my classrooms are.
5	The work we have now is completely new.
6	The teachers know me in school.
7	I am confident walking around the school.
8	The work we have done so far in Year 7 is similar to that in primary school.
9	Changing schools has been really hard.
10	I have a group of friends in school.
11	I understand what the teachers want me to do.
12	Having different teaches for lessons is good.
13	I can do the work in lessons.
14	I can ask the teachers if I need help.
15	I enjoy lessons in The Link.
16	I enjoy other lessons in school.
17	Teachers treat me like an adult.
18	Overall, I think I have settled into my new school.

ACs 'My New School' questionnaire ratings were as follows:

Figure 6.6: Histogram of AC's 'My New School' questionnaire ratings



The response profile illustrates improved ratings with regard to recognising that teachers taught differently at primary school, and having new work to do; knowing his way around the school and being confident at walking around school; the teachers knowing him; and being treated more like an adult. Less positive changes can be seen in terms of AC's sense of belonging at school; understanding what the teachers want him to do; having different lessons; being able to do the work in lessons; asking teachers for help; and enjoying mainstream lessons at school. These trends are consistent with staff perceptions of AC's coping at school, as discussed earlier in Section, 6.2.4.

Table 6.22: AC's 'My New School' questionnaire comments

'My New School' Questionnaire	<i>Summary of additional comments (written with adult support):</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>After the first half term, AC said that he had been looking forward to better lessons, such as cooking and DT.</i></li> <li>• <i>Having two days to visit and meeting new teachers had helped with the move.</i></li> <li>• <i>AC liked the fact that the school had longer break and lunchtimes, and being in the The Link had helped him.</i></li> <li>• <i>At the end of Year 7 his comments were similar.</i></li> <li>• <i>AC also noted the importance of making new friends.</i></li> <li>• <i>He did not feel that moving schools had been hard and having better lessons, like PE had been good.</i></li> <li>• <i>Already knowing people at secondary school had made it easier for him to start there and overall AC felt that he has enjoyed being at secondary.</i></li> </ul>

AC's responses to the open-ended questions regarding experiences of transfer and Year 7 were mostly positive.

#### 6.2.5 Summary and discussion of AC in Year 7 supported by the nurture group

Data collated regarding AC's time in Year 7, both in mainstream classes and the nurture group, would suggest that he coped better in a small group setting. Staff reported that AC was increasingly having problems in other lessons, outside of the nurture group. He had suffered a significant loss (the death of his father) prior to moving to secondary school, Bowlby (1969) would explain that that the change of school would evoke earlier feelings of loss. The nurture group provided AC with a supportive network at the microsystemic level (Bronfenbrenner, 2008), within which there was overlap with primary school experiences. AC noted that he liked attending the nurture group.

Continuing parental concerns were evident, particularly for how he would be supported in Year 8 without the consistent staff and time in the smaller group setting. AC had improved in his development of friendships and had made some progress with learning, which may have

been facilitated by his attending the nurture group for key lessons for much of Year 7. It would appear that re-integration was not working well for AC, however, in particular English lessons. Difficulties here could be as a result of his language and learning difficulties, which had been better addressed within the nurture group context

### **6.3 Case Example 3: RM**

#### **6.3.1 What was known about RM on entry to secondary school and why was he selected for the nurture group**

RM was a male student, aged 11 years, 1 month old, at transfer to secondary school. Records showed that his ethnicity was registered as White/UK and that he had Diabetes and a Care Plan in place. His learning levels appeared to be below average for his age and had received some additional support for learning previously. RM was selected for the nurture group because staff thought that he might find transfer difficult due to his health difficulties and records of low-level behavioural problems at primary school.

#### **6.3.2 The impact of attending a nurture group to support transfer on RM's social and emotional development**

School records shows that there were two incidents of unacceptable behaviour logged for defiance/disruptive behaviour over the course of Year 7 for RM. There was also one incident reported of RM being picked on by someone else. RM had received a high number of merits throughout Year 7, which would suggest that he was regularly rewarded for a positive attitude towards his studies in a number of lessons.

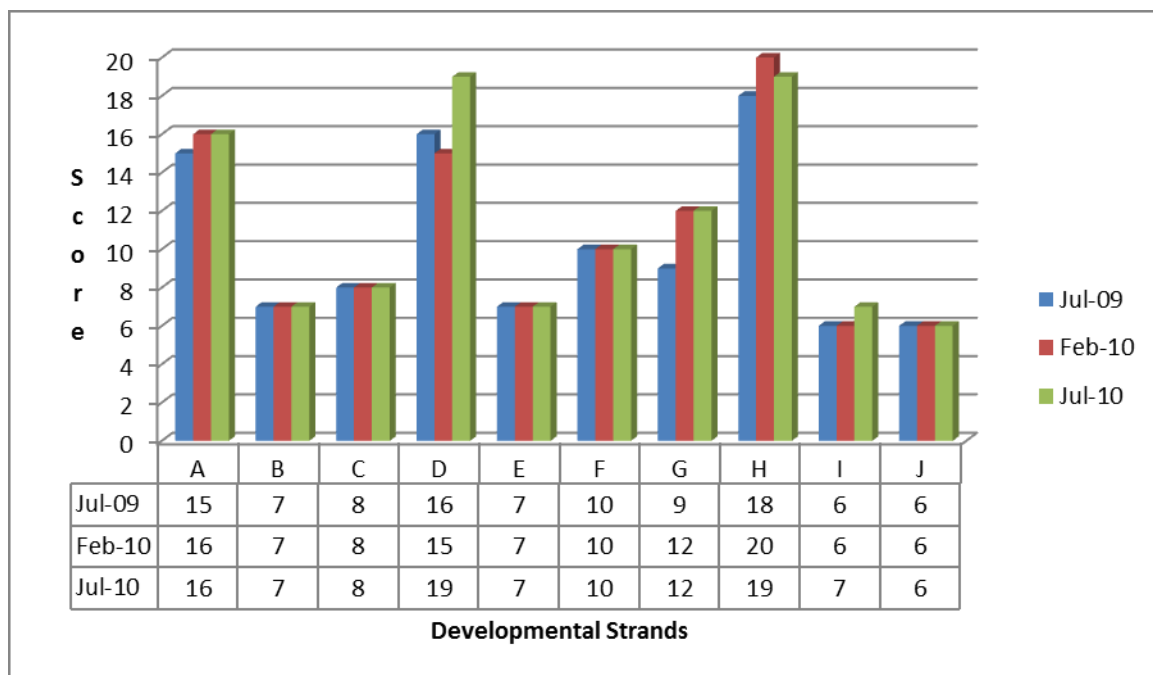
Standardised measures of RM's social, emotional and behavioural skills were captured from Year 6 on three occasions to the end of Year 7 by staff ratings on the Boxall Profile (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998). The table below provides a summary of the key areas measured and histograms of RM's scores over time.

Table 6.23: Strands and sub-strands of the Boxall Profile

Section I: Developmental Strands	
<b>Main strand: Organisation of experience</b>	
A	Gives purposeful attention
B	Participates constructively
C	Connects up experiences
D	Shows insightful involvement
E	Engages cognitively with peers
<b>Main strand: Internalisation of controls</b>	
F	Is emotionally secure
G	Is biddable and accepts constraints
H	Accommodates to others
I	Responds constructively to others
J	Maintains internalised standards
Section II: Diagnostic Profile	
<b>Main strand: Self-limiting features</b>	
Q	Disengaged
R	Self-negating
<b>Main strand: Undeveloped behaviour</b>	
S	Makes undifferentiated attachments
T	Shows inconsequential behaviour
U	Craves attachment, reassurance
<b>Main Strand: Unsupported Development</b>	
V	Avoids/rejects attachment
W	Has undeveloped/insecure sense of self
X	Shows negativism towards self
Y	Shows negativism towards others
Z	Wants, grabs, disregarding others

(Benntan and Boxall, 1998)Figure 6.7:

Figure 6.7: Histogram of Boxall Profile Data for RM: Developmental Strands



The data suggests that RM's scores over time remained relatively stable. Progress is evident in some areas over the course of Year 7 for RM.

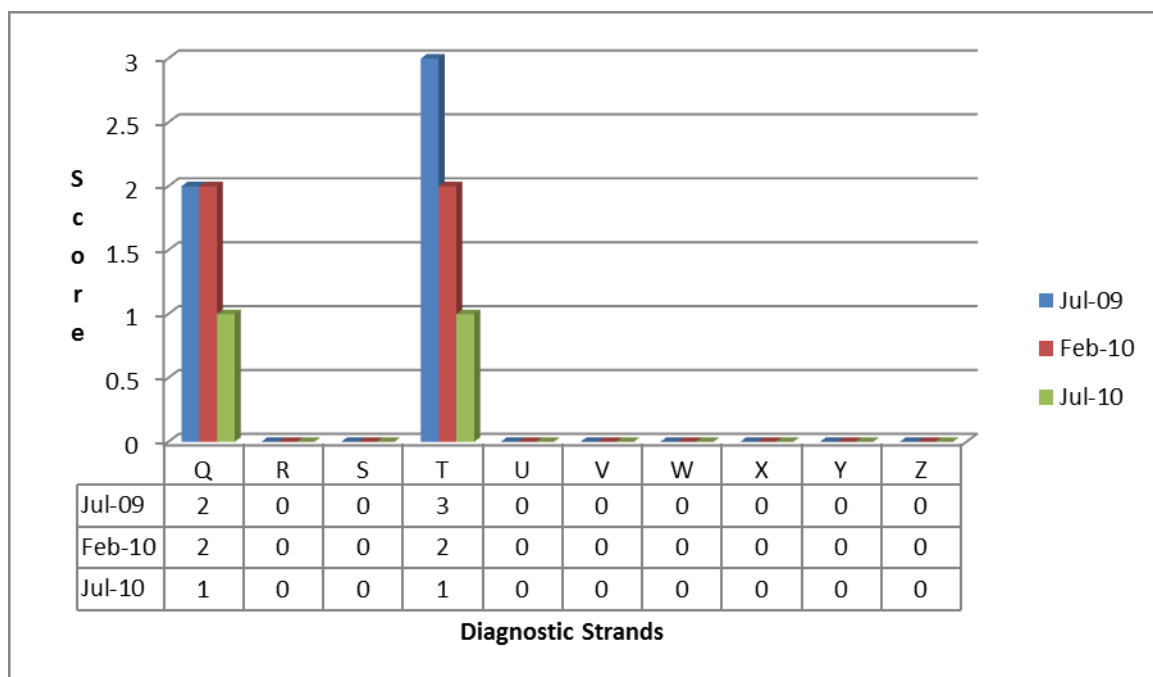


Table 6.24: Boxall Profile progress – RM Developmental Strands

	Criterion	Skill Area
Demonstrates progress	A D G I	Gives purposeful attention Shows insightful involvement Is biddable and accepts constraints Responds constructively to others
Initial progress, not fully sustained	H	Accommodates to others
No progress demonstrated	B C E F J	Participates constructively Connects up experiences Engages cognitively with peers Is emotionally secure Maintains internalised standards

It is noticeable that progress made by RM post-transfer was maintained. This is also reflected in comments made by both RM and his mother in relation to his experiences at primary school, as discussed further below. It would appear that by the end of Year 6 RM was not engaging as well in school as he went on to do in Year 7. Whether attending the nurture group as part of the transfer process helped with this it is difficult to know.

Figure 6.8: Histogram of Boxall Profile Data for RM: Diagnostic Profile



RM did not demonstrate many difficulties socially and emotionally, as measured by the diagnostic strands. However, in the two areas that presented as more problematic for RM, but both showed progress over the course of Year 7.

Table 6.25: Boxall Profile Progress – RM Diagnostic Strands

	Criterion	Skill Area
Progress demonstrated	Q T	Disengaged Shows inconsequential behaviour

Interviews with staff, RM's mother and RM reflect similar findings.

Table 6.26: Key Interview comments – RM social, emotional and behavioural development

	<i>Example comments made during individual interviews:</i>
Pupil	"I like the staff in the nurture group".
Parent	"He has really settled in quite well." "He is getting on better than he did at primary school now". "RM seems to talk about different children and tells me about them, but it is still really N that he seems to play with".
Nurture group staff	"RM has engaged well after not wanting to be in the groups at first". "He has interacted and taken part; he can be reluctant to join in but then does". "RM has developed good relationships with staff". "He has made good friendships, he has one particular friend".

It was noted by staff that RM did not get on so well with the boys in the nurture group. The TA, who had also supported in some mainstream lessons, said that there had been no concerns with RM's behaviour there. He did not think that being in the small group had made making friends any different.

### 6.3.3 The impact of attending a nurture group to support transfer on RM's academic development

School records of reading and maths skills, using age equivalent score (measures and their limitations discussed in Chapter 4, Section 4.3.5) showed that RM had made progress in both areas over the course of Year 7. These are shown in Table 6.27.

Table 6.27: Reading and mathematics data for RM

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Start of Year 7</b>	<b>End of Year 7</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Reading Age	8:02	9:07	17 months progress. Below chronological age.
Mathematics Age	8:09	10:01	16 months progress. Below chronological age.

In terms of his basic learning skills RM had made over 12 months progress in both his basic reading and mathematics skills over the course of the ten month intervention. However, both scores remain below the level expected of a Year 7 student but suggest that RM exceeded progress made in reading and maths in preceding years. Consideration should be given about drawing hard conclusions from this data, due to the lack of reliability of age equivalent scores (as discussed in Chapter 4, Section 4.3.5) but it does provide a picture of RM's academic levels and, in particular his progress in maths skills over Year 7.

Table 6.28: Key interview comments – RM academic development

	<i>Example comments made during individual interviews:</i>
Pupil	<i>"It has been different; less writing, which is good".</i>
Parent	<i>"He finds Maths hard and is doing well at that".</i>

Staff did not comment upon any concerns with regard to RM's learning and attainment in school. RM's own perceptions of his learning were captured in the individual interview. He noted that doing different lessons was a positive thing about his new school.

RM's ratings at the start and end of Year 7 are shown below, in Table 6.12, on the 'Myself As A Learner' scale (Burden, 1998, described in Chapter 4, Section 4.3.5).

Table 6.29: 'Myself as a Learner' Scale standardised scores

Score Oct'09	Range	Score July'10	Range	Difference
74	Average	68	Average	-6 points

RM's self-perceptions as a learner are shown to have decreased by six points over Year 7 but remained within the average range as compared to a standardised sample of Year 7 and 8 aged students. (A score below 60 represents a low-academic self-concept and a score above 82 represents a high academic self-concept, Burden, 1999) this was not reflected in other measures regarding RM's progress, including his own comments and discussion with nurture group staff.

#### 6.3.4 Has being in a nurture group for part of Year 7 been helpful to RM in the process of transfer?

RM's attendance was consistently good throughout Year 7 at 96.8%. His responses were positive about attending the nurture group.

Table 6.30: Key interview comments RM – nurture group experience

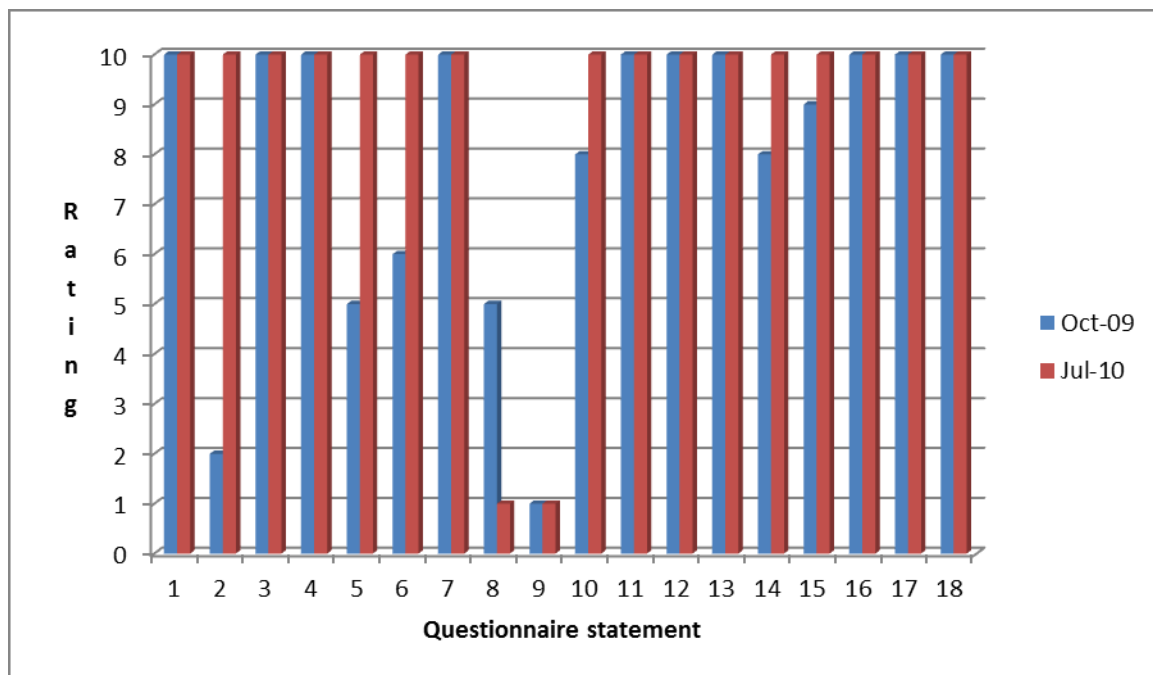
	<i>Example comments made during individual interviews:</i>
Pupil	<p><i>"The classroom (was good), the size of the group smaller; much less than the other lessons".</i></p> <p><i>"I've been responded to when the other school didn't. The work is fun, sometimes difficult but I like a challenge".</i></p>

RM's ratings on the 'My New School' questionnaire, completed at the start and end of Year 7 also demonstrated his positive attitude toward school. These are demonstrated in Figure 6.9 below. The statements are summarised in Table 6.31 for ease of reference.

Table 6.31: Statements on 'My New School' questionnaire

<b>Number</b>	<b><i>Rated statement</i></b>
1	I feel that I belong at my new school.
2	Teachers treat me like a child.
3	Teachers teach in a different way to my primary teachers.
4	I know where my classrooms are.
5	The work we have now is completely new.
6	The teachers know me in school.
7	I am confident walking around the school.
8	The work we have done so far in Year 7 is similar to that in primary school.
9	Changing schools has been really hard.
10	I have a group of friends in school.
11	I understand what the teachers want me to do.
12	Having different teaches for lessons is good.
13	I can do the work in lessons.
14	I can ask the teachers if I need help.
15	I enjoy lessons in The Link.
16	I enjoy other lessons in school.
17	Teachers treat me like and adult.
18	Overall, I think I have settled into my new school.

Figure 6.9: Histogram of RM's 'My New School' ratings



RM’s greatest gains in ratings can be seen in the areas of; being treated like an adult; the work being completely different to at primary school; and the teachers knowing RM at school. Statement 8 is the negatively worded comment (as explained in Chapter 4, Section 4.3.5) this again demonstrates that the work seems different in Year 7 to what it had been at primary school. These ratings would suggest that RM has sustained initial positive attitude towards school over the course of Year 7.

Table 6.32: RM’s ‘My New School’ questionnaire comments

	Summary of additional comments:
'My New School' Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>RM’s responses both just after the first half term of Year 7 and at the end were similar.</i></li> <li>• <i>He had looked forward to meeting new friends and doing different things and lots of work.</i></li> <li>• <i>RM thought that getting homework had helped him to cope and visiting the school.</i></li> <li>• <i>Early on he had been worried about the bigger kids but later though that he had been brave and not worried.</i></li> <li>• <i>Having friends already there had made moving schools easier, it had been good because of better lessons and doing more sports, like tennis.</i></li> <li>• <i>Overall RM had enjoyed moving to secondary school.</i></li> </ul>

Information from RM, as corroborated by adults, suggests that the nurture group support intervention had benefitted RM. His mother thought that this was better support than he had received at primary school and therefore had made progress with his learning. Staff had initially not been sure about whether the nurture group would be appropriate to meet RM’s needs, but he appeared to engage well. RM coped better than most in mainstream lessons. RM’s experiences of secondary school transfer appear to have been positive.

#### 6.3.5 Summary of RM in Year 7 supported by the nurture group

Staff and his mother reported that RM had coped well with the move to secondary school and was doing well there. Both RM and his mother thought that he was better supported in the school than he had been previously. RM was not keen to join at first, however, he appeared to have benefitted from, and enjoyed the experience although may have coped equally as well without this support, transferring with a friend appeared to have provided a protective factor. The importance of friendships at transfer was also found by a number of previous studies into transfer (Durkin, 2000; Tobbell, 2003; Ashton, 2008).

## **6.4 Case Example 4: KW**

### **6.4.1 What was known about KW on entry to secondary school and why was she selected for the nurture group**

KW was a female pupil, aged 11 years, months at the start of Year 7. KW had a Statement of Special Educational Needs (DfEE, 2001), which indicated a high level of need, and a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder. KW has received additionally funded individual support at primary school, which was to continue into secondary school. The nurture group was considered an appropriate way of supporting her transfer into secondary school. Her parents were noted as concerned about transfer and keen to ensure that she was supported during her time in secondary school. KW received additional support in mainstream classrooms, above the level of the other students identified for the nurture group. The Autism Outreach Service from the Local Authority was also involved in supporting KW's needs and regular multi-agency meetings had taken place with regard to the family. School records showed KW's ethnicity as: White/UK.

### **6.4.2 The impact of attending a nurture group to support transfer on KW's social and emotional development**

School behaviour records for Year 7 showed that there had been three incidents of unacceptable behaviour logged for KW; two assaults, and one incident of verbal abuse. There was also a note on her record of bullying from others toward KW. KW had received 521 merits, which was a high number and she had received a 'Lead Learner' award for Maths. Staff explained that at time KW could be challenging and had difficulties with relationships.



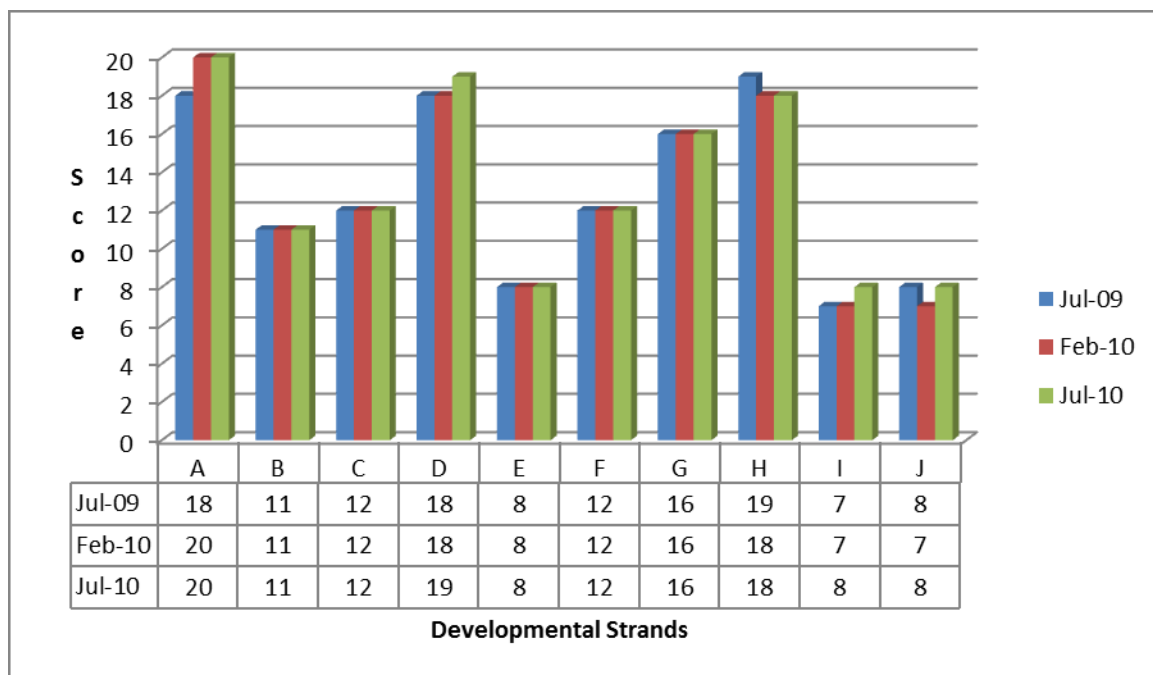
KW's social and emotional skills were recorded from Year 6 through Year 7 on three occasions by staff using the Boxall Profile (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998), which is explained fully in Chapter 4, Section 4.3.5. Histograms 6.10 and 6.11 show these scores over time.

Table 6.33: Strands and sub-strands of the Boxall Profile

Section I: Developmental Strands	
<b>Main strand: Organisation of experience</b>	
A	Gives purposeful attention
B	Participates constructively
C	Connects up experiences
D	Shows insightful involvement
E	Engages cognitively with peers
<b>Main strand: Internalisation of controls</b>	
F	Is emotionally secure
G	Is biddable and accepts constraints
H	Accommodates to others
I	Responds constructively to others
J	Maintains internalised standards
Section II: Diagnostic Profile	
<b>Main strand: Self-limiting features</b>	
Q	Disengaged
R	Self-negating
<b>Main strand: Undeveloped behaviour</b>	
S	Makes undifferentiated attachments
T	Shows inconsequential behaviour
U	Craves attachment, reassurance
<b>Main Strand: Unsupported Development</b>	
V	Avoids/rejects attachment
W	Has undeveloped/insecure sense of self
X	Shows negativism towards self
Y	Shows negativism towards others
Z	Wants, grabs, disregarding others

(Bennathan and Boxall, 1998)

Figure 6.10: Histogram of Boxall Profile Data for KW; Developmental Strands



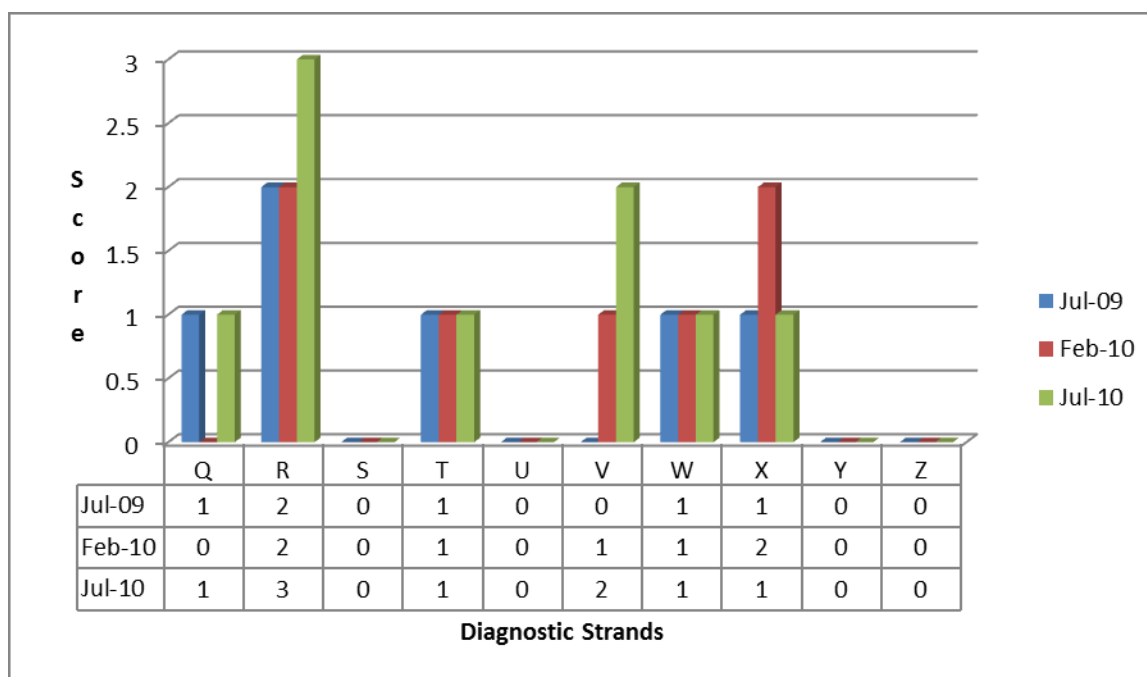
This data shows that KW's social and emotional skills, as measured by the Boxall Profile Developmental Strands remains mostly stable from Year 6 through Year 7.

Table 6.34: Boxall Profile progress – KW Developmental Strands

	Criterion	Skill Area
Demonstrated progress	A D I	Gives purposeful attention Shows insightful involvement Responds constructively to others
Deterioration demonstrated	H	Accommodates to others

It would appear that the skills areas that require interacting with other children had caused KW more difficult, despite spending part of her time in Year 7 within a small nurture group setting.

Figure 6.11: Histogram of Boxall Profile Data for KW; Diagnostic Profile



Diagnostic strands suggest a more changeable set of skills.

Table 6.35: Boxall Profile progress – KW Diagnostic Strands

	Criterion	Skill Area
Initial progress, not sustained	Q	Disengaged
Deterioration demonstrated	R V	Self-negating Avoids/rejects attachment

Overall limited progress has been demonstrated; in particular ‘self-negating’ has become more of a problem, as has attachment. There has been progress noted with showing negativism towards others.

Staff who supported KW within the nurture group explained that in the first term KW presented as a “model student” within the nurture group, however, as the year progressed KW presented as more negatively. This appeared to be in relation to some difficulties experienced socially. KW had made friends with two other children within the group but found others more difficult to engage with.

Table 6.36: Key interview comments – KW’s social, emotional and behavioural development

	<i>Example comments made during individual interviews:</i>
Pupil	<i>“People coming around me outside in the corridor and large classrooms, there has been name-calling, I was petrified, they were shouting down my ear which upset me”. “I have made a few new friends in The Link”.</i>
Parents	<i>“It is mainly not lessons that has been a problem, it is being bullied”. “There is not enough awareness out there; they need more understanding for other children about Autism”.</i>
Nurture group staff	<i>“She has been generally engaged and made good relationships with staff”. “KW gets very loud, anxious and worked up about things, bringing things in from home and will not let them go”. “The corridors and whole school is harder for KW, she perceives bullying; she takes any slight personally”. “KW does not like the noise; she is more sensitive to it”.</i>

KW's parents expressed the problems KW had with one other girl in the group and cited this as the cause of the problem KW had experienced as she progressed into Year 7. They thought that KW had made new friends and coped with different staff in school.

#### 6.4.3 The impact of attending a nurture group to support transfer on KW's academic development

Table 6.37: Reading and mathematics data for KW

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Start of Year 7</b>	<b>End of Year 7</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Reading Age	absent	14:06	Above chronological age.
Mathematics Age	absent	9:11	Below chronological age.

KW demonstrated good reading skills but lower mathematical skills, although these age equivalent scores provide limited accuracy (as discussed in Chapter 4, Section 4.3.5), this school-based data does indicate that KW was more academically able than other students within the nurture group. KW's scores were not able to be collected over time and therefore a comparison cannot be made but do add to the profile of KW's skills and difficulties.

Table 6.38: 'Myself As A Learner' Scale standardised scores

Score Oct'09	Range	Score July'10	Range	Difference
88	High	82	Average	-6 points

KW's self-perceptions as a learner are shown to have decreased by six points over Year 7 and gone from the high to the average range as compared to a standardised sample of Year 7 and 8 aged students. A score below 60 represents a low-academic self-concept and a score above 82 represents a high academic self-concept (Burden, 1999). It would appear that KW's self-perceptions as a learner had lessened over the course of Year 7, along with the social difficulties that she was experiencing. Yet KW appeared to be coping in most

mainstream lessons, as reflected by the TA who support her, and was academically able enough access the work.

#### 6.4.4 Has being in a nurture group for part of Year 7 been helpful to KW in the process of transfer?

KW's attendance throughout Year 7 was 92.4%, absences were authorised for illness. Staff did not think that KW was reluctant to attend school.

Table 6.39: Key interview comments – KW transfer experience

	<i>Example comments made during individual interviews:</i>
Pupil	<p><i>"Overall settling in has been great and stuff, KW was worried that she would get lost and not make any friends. Induction days helped".</i></p> <p><i>"People coming around her outside and large classrooms made me petrified".</i></p> <p><i>"The Link is fun, outside things have gone hay wol with people bullying. The Link has been better, KW would rather stay The Link all day. There are not loads of kids outside the mobile".</i></p> <p><i>"I have made a couple of friends in The Link but others have not been so good".</i></p> <p><i>"Year 8 is going to be very nerve-racking but not as bad as Year 7, I have got more experience now.</i></p> <p><i>"The children are more mature at secondary than primary. People know I've got a disability now".</i></p>
Parents	<p><i>"We are really proud of her, her school reports. We never thought in a million years that she would get reports like that here (Excellent and good). The problems need to be sorted out".</i></p> <p><i>"It is not about the size of the group, it is the particular children. One boy in The Link has been very nice and never said anything nasty".</i></p> <p><i>"KW gets on with other teachers, she has coped with more teachers and got used to it".</i></p> <p><i>"Teachers speaking to parents a lot, she was doing great at first".</i></p> <p><i>"The small group has helped".</i></p>
Nurture group staff	<p><i>"If it is an organised classroom she copes, but she doesn't like the noise."</i></p> <p><i>"In the nurture group she had the opportunity to express herself and 'get things off her chest' in Circle Time, she shares things and has always verbally done this."</i></p> <p><i>"KW would benefit from a similar provision next year".</i></p> <p><i>"Perceptions of bullying at school and home are a problem".</i></p> <p><i>"Finishing in the nurture group, having lots of changes of Teachers and cover lessons has caused problems. There have been a lot of changes".</i></p>

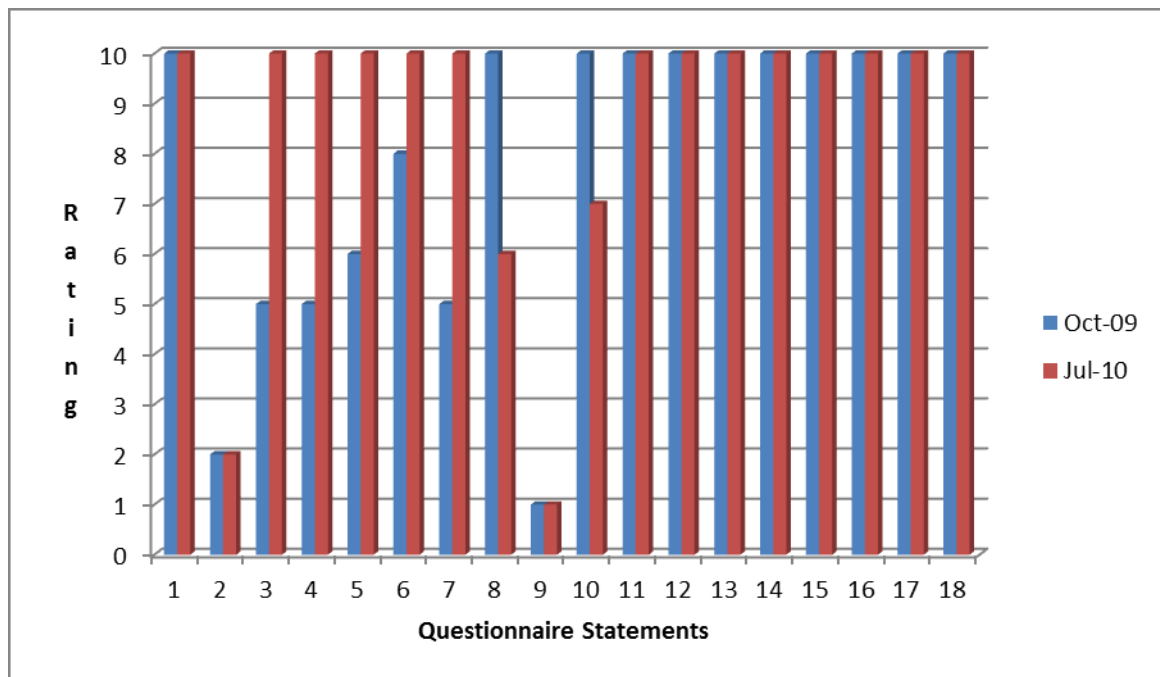
Staff reported that KW had coped well initially within the nurture group and in mainstream lessons with a TA present; had KW had been on the nurture group full-time, with the same teacher she would have coped better.

KW's perceptions of school over the course of Year 7 were measured on the 'My New School' questionnaire. The ratings are shown in Histogram 6.12 and Table 6.17 provides a summary of the statements, for ease of reference.

Table 6.40: Statements on 'My New School' questionnaire

<b>Number</b>	<b><i>Rated statement</i></b>
1	I feel that I belong at my new school.
2	Teachers treat me like a child.
3	Teachers teach in a different way to my primary teachers.
4	I know where my classrooms are.
5	The work we have now is completely new.
6	The teachers know me in school.
7	I am confident walking around the school.
8	The work we have done so far in Year 7 is similar to that in primary school.
9	Changing schools has been really hard.
10	I have a group of friends in school.
11	I understand what the teachers want me to do.
12	Having different teachers for lessons is good.
13	I can do the work in lessons.
14	I can ask the teachers if I need help.
15	I enjoy lessons in The Link.
16	I enjoy other lessons in school.
17	Teachers treat me like an adult.
18	Overall, I think I have settled into my new school.

Figure 6.12: Histogram of KW's 'My New School' questionnaire ratings



The data show that on five ratings KW demonstrated a more positive response by the end of Year 7 in. These were in relation to;

- teachers teaching in a different way to primary school;
- knowing where her classrooms are;
- the work being completely different;
- the teachers knowing KW in school; and
- being confident walking around the school.

Most areas remained the same, with positive responses, including;

- being treated like a child; and
- changing schools being really hard.

However, KW demonstrated some regression in her perception of;

- having a group of friends in school.

Table 6.41: KW's 'My New School' questionnaire comments

'My New School' Questionnaire	<i>Summary of additional comments:</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>after the first half term KW had noted that she had been looking forward to moving to secondary because they stuck up for the person who is being bullied instead of the other way round.</i></li> <li>• <i>inset days had helped her to prepare for moving schools but it was hard because she sometimes got lost.</i></li> <li>• <i>it had been good moving to secondary school because the teachers were helpful and more fun lessons.</i></li> <li>• <i>at that point in time KW noted that she had enjoyed being at secondary so far.</i></li> <li>• <i>comments at the end of Year 7 demonstrated that she felt she had been looking forward to the things she would discover and induction days and open evening had helped to prepare her. Nothing had been hard in moving schools and she liked that she can learn new things.</i></li> <li>• <i>overall KW had enjoyed being at secondary because things are different to primary school.</i></li> </ul>

These fit with staff and parent comments regarding the difficulties KW began to experience socially during Year 7. This was also demonstrated by Boxall Profile scores at the end of Year 7, with problems increasingly regarding attachments and being more self-negating. The SENCo also explained that KW had more changes to cope with by the end of Year 7, which appeared to be impacting upon her ability to cope.

KW's parents, similarly during an interview at the end of Year 7, had noticed the change within KW toward the end of Year 7 but could also reflect upon the positive aspects of her transfer to secondary school.

Information from adults suggests that KW coped better in the nurture group support setting. As Year 7 has progressed being in the mainstream context has become more problematic for her. Both parents and staff note that KW was vulnerable and needed a smaller 'safe place'. Relations between parents and school staff had also broken down over the course of Year 7; this may have been as a result of the move towards increased time in mainstream school



quite suddenly towards the end of Year 7. Progress in terms of learning has been recognised.

KW appeared to have enjoyed time in the nurture group and have been able to make some friendships there. The wider school context was more problematic for her. Re-integration at the end of Year 7 would appear to have been challenging and would suggest that the nurture group had been an effective support mechanism for transfer, however could not continue into Year 8.

#### 6.4.5 Summary and discussion of KW in Year 7 supported by the nurture group

KW appeared to find the safety of a small group environment important to her coping with transferring to secondary school. Socially she had made friends in the setting, as reported by her parents and staff. KW had ongoing difficulties with wider social situations, as you may expect with a child with an Autism Spectrum Disorder in school but academically continued to make progress. It would appear that found interpreting aspects of busy school life, increasingly as re-integration started, difficult to cope. The nurture group provided KW with a small supportive environment in from which to be able to go into mainstream lessons and the relationship she was able to build there were mostly positive. However, a number of measures demonstrated that KW was finding it increasingly difficult to cope by the end of Year 7, despite having individual support.

Hodson et al (2005) found that pupils on the SEN register in Year 7 presented as having less favourable response for aspects of school life, which would appeared to be the case also, although KWs self-perception tended to be mixed, her overall ratings were generally improved over the course of Year 7, and however aspects of this became increasingly

problematic for her. Iszatt and Wasilewska (2007) similarly found that children supported by a nurture group required less additional support in school over time, in this case it would appear that whilst nurture group was fully implemented KW coped a lot better but was likely going to need an increased level of ongoing support within school without this.

## **6.5 Discussion of case example findings in relation to the research questions**

- *What impact does being in the Year 7 nurture group have on young peoples' social and emotional skill development?*

Socially, it would appear that the nurture group particularly helped a Year 7 student with ASD in making positive relationships in a small safe environment. This became apparent from student, staff and parental perceptions. It also seemed to encourage increased participation for more quiet students, such as BJ, and provided an opportunity for confidence to increase, which was noticed by parents as well as staff. Hodson et al. (2006) highlighted the importance of staff working with Year 7 students having information regarding special educational needs. The nurture group approach allowed for increased time to get to know the children, their needs and liaise more closely with the previous school and parents. This is likely to have had a positive impact. Bailey and Baines (2012) found that SEN was a risk factor consistently shown at transfer.

- *What impact does participation in the nurture groups have in the young people's academic performance?*

Of the four case examples those assessed over time for reading and basic maths skills progress was seen. Self-perceptions as a learner increased slightly for two of the four students but greater regression in scores were seen for the other two students. Bryan and Treanor (2007) similarly found that small group teaching at transfer demonstrated improved

pupil attainment as compared to larger group teacher initially in secondary school. Likewise nurture group studies have demonstrated academic progress, despite pupils being taught out of mainstream classes (Scott and Lee, 2009).

- *Has being in a nurture group for part of their time in Year 7 been helpful in the process of transfer to secondary school as perceived by the students?*

It would appear that this was the case for all four students, staff and parents noted the support in this small group setting had been beneficial. For one student, RM, not so noticeably and for KW there were ongoing and increasing difficulties towards the end of Year 7, however the group was reported by all to have had a positive impact, particularly early on following transfer.

- *How do staff directly involved in the Nurture group feel it has worked as a way of supporting vulnerable Year 7 students?*

The small group setting and increased consistency of support was seen as valuable for these four students. Having a safe place to go throughout the school day was also noted as a supportive factor as well as an opportunity to make new friends in a smaller setting. Increased with parents at the start of Year 7 was important. Difficulties that increased after the level of nurture group support reduced were identified as demonstrating the importance of this more primary school approach to supporting the move to secondary school.

- *Which aspects of the intervention have contributed to/militated against its achieving the desired outcomes?*

Increased parental links and links with the SEN Department were noted as important. In additional access to consistent support staff and opportunities for the staff to get to know

individual students quickly were seen as being of particular benefit to supporting these vulnerable students at transfer

## **CHAPTER 7: CONCLUDING DISCUSSION**

The aim of this study was to use an intervention, based upon existing evidence of the effectiveness of nurture groups, to support transfer to secondary school by providing a planned and structured strategy to support students identified as vulnerable by their primary schools. From what is known of the negative effects of transfer to secondary school, this appeared to be a viable solution, to help limit risks of a 'dip' in progress, as identified by the large-scale study by Galton, Gray and Ruddock (1999), in addition to emotional effects, such as those identified by the anxiety scale ratings from the ORACLE study, Galton and Willcocks (1983).

The nurture group, in the current study, provided a similar approach to the work of Dutch and McCall in 1974, by creating a separate transition department for children to transfer into to alleviate the scale of the changes they faced. Use of the nurture group model (Bennathan and Boxall, 2000) allowed for a combined approach of being in a smaller, nurturing setting for part of their time in school, with the remainder in the mainstream setting with consistent support.

### **7.1 Conclusions in relation to the initial research questions**

Five key research questions were formulated, to be answered via collation of quantitative and qualitative data from the whole group and by more detailed information relation to the progress research data in relation of four of the pupils. Conclusions that can be drawn from the research data in relation to these five questions are summarised below.

*What impact does being in a Year 7 nurture group have on young people's social and emotional skill development?*

Findings from Boxall Profile scores and comments made in interview by parents, pupils and staff have shown that there were positive outcomes for most of pupils who were supported nurture group. Themes abstracted from the qualitative data suggested that, whilst there were ongoing difficulties in school for three of the ten students, students had felt supported and been able to develop their social and learning skills within the smaller, nurture group environment.

Other nurture group studies have demonstrated positive outcomes for children's basic academic skill development, and social and emotional development, as measured in the latter case by the Boxall Profile. Cooper and Whitebread (2007) found that the maintenance of these skills is evident for children, with the wider positive effects of nurture groups also reported in their effects on school ethos, described contributing to a "nurturing school". However, in this instance, such generalised benefits were not reported: the nurture group was described by staff as an isolated entity, with little evidence of other staff having developed an understanding of its purpose and planned effects, or of 'mainstream' staff developing a more nurturing orientation within their own practice. The secondary school nurture group studied by Cooke, Yeomans and Parkes (2008) was established following whole staff training in nurture principles and wider positive effects were noted.

Sanders (2007) found that the most important outcome of nurture group provision was that most children who had attended, remained in mainstream school despite previous difficulties. This can be seen as the case for the ten students who spent Year 7 in the nurture group, with the exception of one student, for whom there were no data beyond the initial referral, who was permanently excluded within the first three weeks. Had this young person had

increased opportunity to experience the nurture group support, there may have been a different outcome: as noted in Chapter 5, Section 5.3.2.

Limited wider school staff skills in working with vulnerable and, at times, challenging youngsters became apparent from both nurture group, pastoral and senior staff interviewed, as noted in Chapter 5, Section 5.3.2. Boxall Profile data from Cooke et al. (2008) demonstrated clear improvement on student Development Strands, but not so for Diagnostic Strands. The current study demonstrated overall progress in both areas measured by Boxall Profiles for most students, despite a small number of students appearing to find secondary school increasingly difficult as they moved through Year 7.

Case example data for individual pupils, from parents and staff in this study, have demonstrated that participating in the smaller nurture group appeared to help foster new friendships for the young people. It also allowed for these vulnerable students to be able to make relationships with the staff, which in the case of the TA, could then be harnessed in other classes. However, when asked about having a group of friends in school, student questionnaire responses demonstrated deterioration in ratings over the course of Year 7. Comments made highlighted that pupils were looking forward to making new friends at the start of the year (Table 5.18) and meeting new friends was noted by pupils as a positive experience having moved to secondary school (Table 5.22). It could be concluded that by the end of Year 7 friendships were more difficult in the wider school setting for some.

*What impact does participation in the nurture group have on the young people's academic performance?*

Reading scores of pupils who attended the nurture group, over the course of 10 months in Year 7 increased for all students; however, the measures used were crude and could not be

considered fully reliable due the school having ownership of this component of baseline assessment and longitudinal monitoring, and the different measures used.

Maths scores, likewise demonstrated improvement. Some of the pupils moved into higher maths sets as the year progressed, which affected the sample results but would suggest that these 'promoted' students were judged to have made sufficient progress to be able to manage more challenging work; however, the moves and lack of July 2010 data for the 'promoted' students resulted in loss of research data.

Assessment of basic skills over time did not evidence a 'dip' in progress. Having a primary school trained-teacher for the group and a consistent teaching assistant, for support both in and out of this group, may have contributed to the impact of the group.

Pupils' self-ratings on the 'Myself As A Learner' Scale showed mixed progress over time, with four pupils increasing and four decreasing in their score over the two occasions they completed the scale. Individual pupil 'My New School' ratings, of learning experiences in Year 7, did not show an overall significant trend suggesting changed perceptions, although noticeable was that enjoying lessons in the nurture group was one aspect that had increased over time: a trend which was not evident for other lessons.

These finding suggest that academically the children who attended the nurture group for part of Year 7, within this study, did not experience the academic 'dip' identified by Galton et al. (1999), and is consistent with other nurture group research demonstrating mixed progress over the time period children participated in nurture group provision (Cooper et al. 2001, Ofsted, 2011).



*Has being in a nurture group for part of their time in Year 7 been helpful in supporting the process of transfer to secondary school as perceived by the students?*

Self-reflective rating scales by pupils demonstrated that 'The Link' was rated increasingly as being enjoyable, whereas ratings for other lessons in school had decreased over the course of Year 7. It was not possible to ascertain whether the support of the nurture group supported the pupils to adapt to their change of school, or merely delayed the process of having to cope in mainstream secondary school.

From pupil questionnaires, focus group discussion and individual pupil interviews it was apparent that all students involved in the evaluation demonstrated and/or reported positive effects of attending the group; there were no negative comments about the small group setting, with the exception of one student who appeared to dislike all aspects of school. In all but a minority of cases student feedback was positive about the group, which students would have liked to continue. Parental interviews also reflected this: parents valued the contact with staff to help support transfer to secondary school.

*Do staff directly involved in the nurture group think it has provided an effective way of supporting vulnerable Year 7 students?*

Wider school staff, such as the Senior Management Teacher linked to the group and Year 7 Pastoral Coordinator, appeared to value the support that the nurture group provided. These staff noted their belief that it would be beneficial if all school staff had been trained in, and adopted some of the key "nurturing" skills and the wider uptake and maintenance of this provision and that the students themselves would have benefited from ongoing provision.

Staff directly involved in the nurture group were able to identify positive social influences on pupils of being in the group, such as friendships; developing and increased confidence in activities; the support they had each been offered and the contact with parents. The knowledge and experience of the primary-trained teacher leading the group was also commented upon as a beneficial factor in helping the young people make academic progress and adapt to learning within the secondary school. Having the same Teaching Assistant (TA) supporting pupils within the nurture group and in mainstream lessons was considered valuable, with staff consistency deemed key to the intervention's success.

The rapid, reactive and not well-planned, re-integration into mainstream school in the third term of Year 7 was noted by all staff interviewed as having been problematic for many of the students involved. This rapid fading of the nurture group support had not been planned for in the design of the intervention, but resulted from the wider school influence of moving toward academy status.

*What aspects of the nurture group intervention are considered to have contributed to/militated against providing effective support to Year 7 pupils?*

Despite this intervention, two students continued to have difficulties within school, with numerous negative behaviour reports or ongoing concerns reported to staff. None of the incidents reported recurred within nurture group sessions, however: all were in the wider school context, which would suggest that in a smaller setting with a higher level of support and activities tailored to engage students at an appropriate level of challenge, and with ready access to sensitively attuned support students coped better than they were able to outside of this setting. A factor related to this, in particular for one student with ASD, may have been that the building in which the Link was located was away from the main school building. Busy corridors appeared a particular difficulty for this young person. What had initially

appeared to staff as a negative factor, (students being placed in a mobile classroom away from the main building), may have been a contributory factor to its success in the short term at least: a number of students commented upon the fact that the Link felt like a safe haven away from the busy school building. Parents and staff also reflected this in their responses.

However, it appeared that the nurture group provided an incomplete solution. The Link did provide a safe haven, but without carefully managed bridging from this to the turbulent social and physical environment of mainstream school, its effects were not retained longer-term for some pupils.

The nurture group provided several opportunities to deal with difficulties that arose early on, such as one child not eating lunch. Staff did appear to be somewhat isolated from the wider school staff, which could have been improved by better communication from the outset regarding the purpose and running of the group, and yet the geographical isolation of the group appeared to provide the 'safe base' (Bowlby, 1969) that was needed by a number of these vulnerable students, although this could be seen as indicative of the school culture and level of organisational commitment to levels of integration of those with special educational needs.

## **7.2 Links to Tobbell's study of transfer (2003)**

Emerging from the evidence it is apparent that there are links to the work of Tobbell (2003). In particular, the significance of school as a community was perceived as important to the success of transfer. As noted in Table 5.24, relationships and communication were identified as key influences on the transfer experience and its outcomes in supporting this group of vulnerable young people and the role of individual teachers was also apparent, as discussed in Section 5.4. Surprisingly, in the current study, there was not a great deal of evidence of

students feeling lost at the start of Year 7, however spending a large part of their week within the nurture group and having a consistent teaching assistant in most other lessons may have lessened this impact for them. Students demonstrated mixed views with regard to whether they felt treated differently by staff as they had in their previous schools.

### **7.3 Theoretical implications of this study**

Findings from this study would suggest that the children did value and benefit from having a 'secure base' from which to increase their confidence within the mainstream school, which fits with attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969; Ainsworth, 1970). Students demonstrating difficulty in mainstream lessons, such as AC in particular, as discussed in Chapter 6, Section 6.2.2, may have been a manifestation of a resistant/ambivalent attachment pattern (Geddes, 2003), which was not evident in the nurture group setting. At this 'micro-level' (Bronfenbrenner, 1998) the continuity of staff, and structure of the sessions, would appear to have been quite effective in creating a more manageable world within the school, but the impact of the whole-school culture had its effect. The impact of the 'macro-system' on the children, in some instances, would appear to have undermined the impact of the nurture group 'micro-system'. In order for the positive outcome to have been generalised the whole school culture needed to be changed/addressed to have maximum impact, as was the case in Cooke et al. (2008).

### **7.4 Limitations of this study**

The nurture group intervention was adapted from a model used within primary schools and aimed to combine a 'mini school' ethos (Lunham, 2009) to transfer with a nurture group approach, which was novel to the school and to all staff and based upon one example study, Cooke et al. (2008). Most previous research showed the problem of transfer generally

theorised in either a positivist way, focussing in academic attainment and measures of progress, or explore pupils' subjective experiences. Nurture groups are very much theorised using attachment theory to explain the benefits of this approach to supporting vulnerable pupils. This study aimed to combine both of these, requiring a wide range of data collection in a short timescale, without opportunity for piloting data collection tools.

In its implementation there were problems from the outset; a small number of secondary school staff were involved in the implementation of the intervention and the location of the group was physically isolated. The cohort of students within the nurture group had a wide range of differing needs. Student selection was led by staff working in the nurture group, both at the outset and for the case study element of the research, which could have been influenced by their perception of pupil and parent experiences. Staff involved were clearly nurture group supporters and, as with the potential limitations of much of the nurture group research, it is undertaken and reported by researchers who are far from neutral, creating a high risk of confirmation bias. However, Patton (2001) does highlight that qualitative research sampling by those who know participants are able to offer information-rich participants.

The students selected for 'The Link' had a notably different Year 7 experience to the rest of their peers, this holds negative, as well as the expected positive effects. Lauchlan and Boyle (2007), for example, examine the effects of labelling. In the current study, whilst The Link was not openly called a nurture group, staff regularly referred to it as this and other students were aware that this group of students had a different timetable to them. One student mentioned during his research interview that other children had commented that this additional support was not fair. Being part of this group from the start of Year 7 carried some risk of labelling regarding the nature or 'calibre' of the students, from staff as well as peers.

Staff expectations of the students involved may have been lower across the school knowing that they received this support. Without the capacity to continue this intervention, due to wider school planning priorities, it was not possible to determine how the impact of participation in 'The Link' for part of Year 7 may have affected the young people and staff involved in the following school year/s. Cooper and Whitebread (2007) found that the impact of a nurture group in school was seen to improve over time, which was not possible to evaluate in this case.

There were limitations in the design of the study. It was a small scale piece of research within one secondary school, as was that of Cooke et al. (2008), therefore generalisations cannot be made from the results. The intervention was devised in response to school identification of need and a nurture group approach adapted to fit. Measures used were wide-ranging and provided large amounts of data, possibly too much within the scale of this study, for example the 'My New School' questionnaires could have provided fewer, more focused, ratings. In the coding and creation of themes, from the qualitative data, interrater reliability checks were not made, although staff involved had access to key findings in a summary report to school, and agreed with them. By using a theory driven approach to the qualitative data collection, based upon the findings of Tobbell (2003), questionnaires and rating scales were developed around the five themes identified by Tobbell, enhancing the likelihood of findings from this study reflecting similar themes, and possibly omitting alternatives. The Boxall Profile (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998) is standardised on a younger age range than the participants, affecting its validity in this study.

The school also had its own mechanism for obtaining this information which was utilised and in the case of reading scores was flawed as did not use the same measure over time, affecting reliability of data. Mobility of pupils between teaching groups also affected the data collection process, as did wider pupil mobility in and out of the school. Staff directly involved

in the nurture group were interested in the effects for individual students on their outcomes for Year 7, this may have meant an element of confirmation bias as they had invested time and their belief in this intervention.

My dual identity as both the educational psychologist for the school, and the researcher, meant that I was mindful that I would have an ongoing professional relationship with the school and with some of the children and parents involved; I therefore unable to adopt a 'pure', detached position as a researcher. However, within the interpretivist epistemology within which this study was primarily situated, I would not judge this problematic, but rather as helpful in affording improved access to people and a more fully nuanced understanding of the school culture, processes and the force field which influenced both staff and pupils behaviour. The fact that I enjoyed trusting relationships with staff also addressed the ethical risks that may have occurred had I been 'just' a researcher: of the participants simply being the 'objects' of my research, from which I mined data for my own benefit, without longer term commitment to use the insights gained from the study to contribute to school improvement within the focus school.

The project was initially set up for three years with ongoing support planned to be available for students gradually decreasing as they moved through Key Stage 3. However, changes to the school, including staffing difficulties and moving quickly towards academy status, had direct impact upon the nurture group, and upon the longer term uptake of the research findings and the recommendations arising from it. The decision by senior school staff to quickly end the group was made prior to evidence collation and not based upon the effectiveness of the group and repercussions of this for students meant a hastily planned reintegration in the final term of Year 7, which appeared to cause a number of student increased difficulties. This might suggest that without the support of the group the students would not have coped in Year 7. However, it may also suggest that the nurture group

approach to transfer merely delayed the inevitable outcome for some students who were likely to find secondary school a challenge. Without the use of a comparison group it is not possible to predict how similar students might have coped in their first year at secondary school without the support of a nurture group for part of their school week.

### **7.5 Implications for educational psychology practice**

A nurture group approach could provide valuable future opportunities for educational psychologists to work with staff to support the most vulnerable pupils in Year 7. In order for this to be effective, there would be a need for clearer time implications and an agreed plan for the nurture group's start and end. Training for all school staff in 'nurturing' approaches could be a valuable contribution the educational psychologist could make, along with ongoing evaluation of the effects in young people's educational outcomes, using agreed measures.

### **7.6 Implications for further research**

Overall the study would suggest that all involved in the Year 7 nurture group provision believed it had helped students to feel supported on their transfer to secondary school.

With the current growth of nurture group interventions in secondary schools (Colley, 2011) and evidence of their success, the use of this approach specifically to transfer would be appear to be a worthwhile strategy to employ, with a long-term re-integration plan and means of continuing to support pupils beyond Year 7 in some capacity, as implemented previously by Cooke et al. (2008). It would be beneficial to see the outcomes for young people supported in this way at the end of Key Stage 3 and possibly into Key Stage 4. This study has, however, provided a wide range of quantitative and qualitative measure to evidence the effectiveness of this nurture group to support transfer over a short period of time.



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## Appendix 1

Dear Parent

As you aware your child has been chosen to be part of a smaller teaching group for some of the time in Year 7.

To see how well the children do in this group over the year and to get their views on how well they think it has worked I would like to ask them some questions as a group and to ask them to fill in some rating scale activities. The group discussions shall be recorded and the information used to write a report for the school and the parents of the children within the group about how well the group has worked. All information will be confidential: no children's names will be included in this information.

If you are happy for your child to be involved in the evaluation please fill in the slip below and ask your child to return it to Mrs H.

If you have any other questions about this please don't hesitate to contact me on 01543 5----- or speak to Mrs H or Mrs P about it.

Thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely

Julia Rudolf  
Educational Psychologist

---

I agree that ..... (name) has my permission to take part in discussions about the group with Julia Rudolf, Educational Psychologist.

Signed ..... (signature)  
..... (print) parent name  
..... (date)

Child Information Sheet

Evaluation of a Year 7 small teaching group.

I would like to do a project to find out what it has been like for you being taught as part of this group in Year 7. I would like to do this by discussion in small groups with me and by some activities on your own. The small group discussions will be recorded to help me remember what we talked about afterwards, but once I have got all of this written down the recording shall be got rid of.

This information will be helpful to know what has worked well for you or what could be done differently in the future. Your views will be shared with other people but your name will not be on the information collected so anything you say will be kept confidential.

Your parents and teachers have already said that it is fine for you to take part in this project, but I wanted to make sure that you would like to do this. It is your choice, no one will be upset if you do not want to take part or even if you change your mind part way through. If you did not want to do part of it you could say; "I don't want to do this activity" or "I want to miss this bit out." You can ask me or your teacher any questions you have about the project now or at any time.

Signing your name at the bottom of this sheet means that you agree to take part in these activities.

Julia Rudolf, Educational Psychologist

Agreement Form

I have read the information about this project and understand that I am volunteering and can leave the project at any time I want. I understand that my views will be shared with others but will not have my name on them so people will not know it is what I have said.

I agree to take part in the project.

Name : \_\_\_\_\_  
(please print in full)

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Appendix 3

#### **Form EC2 for POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH (PGR) STUDENTS** **MPhilA, MPhilB, MPhil/PhD, EdD, PhD IS**

This form MUST be completed by ALL students studying for postgraduate research degrees and can be included as part of the thesis even in cases where no formal submission is made to the Ethics Committee. Supervisors are also responsible for checking and conforming to the ethical guidelines and frameworks of other societies, bodies or agencies that may be relevant to the student's work.

#### **Tracking the Form**

- I. Part A completed by the student
- II. Part B completed by the supervisor
- III. Supervisor refers proposal to Ethics Committee if necessary
- IV. Supervisor keeps a copy of the form and send the original to the Student Research Office, School of Education
- V. Student Research Office – form signed by Management Team, original kept in student file.

#### **Part A: to be completed by the STUDENT**

NAME: Julia Rudolf

COURSE OF STUDY: Ed Psych D

POSTAL ADDRESS FOR REPLY: -

CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBER: -

EMAIL ADDRESS: -

DATE: 8.8.09

NAME OF SUPERVISOR: S

PROPOSED PROJECT TITLE:

'Helping vulnerable young people make a successful transfer to secondary school: An evaluation of the effectiveness of a nurture group'.

BRIEF OUTLINE OF PROJECT: (100-250 words; this may be attached separately)

The research is to be an evaluation of a Year 7 nurture group being set up for the first time in a secondary school. The group is for up to 15 vulnerable students transferring to the school, as identified by primary school staff. Students will be taught by a primary trained teacher, with Teaching Assistant (TA) support, for English, Maths and Humanities throughout the year. In addition, students will also have support from the same TA in the mainstream class for most other key subject areas. The students shall be selected using Boxall Profile data and recent Individual Education Plans as provided by Primary Schools.

The evaluation of this group shall have two aspects;

1. School based data; including Boxall Profile data pre, during and at the end of the academic year collected by the nurture group teacher, basic Literacy and Numeracy skills assessment scores taken at the start and end of Year 7 by the nurture group teacher.
2. Qualitative data collected by the Educational Psychologist (EP) via individual scaling activities to obtain the view of students after half a term at secondary school and then again at the end of the year. Focus group discussions will also take place at the end of the year to obtain detailed information regarding the student's perceptions of their first year at secondary school and the support that they have received for this from attending a nurture group for part of the week. A more in-depth semi-structured interview with one student regarding their experiences of being in the nurture group.

MAIN ETHICAL CONSIDERATION(S) OF THE PROJECT (e.g. working with vulnerable adults; children with disabilities; photographs of participants; material that could give offence etc):

I shall be working with students identified as being vulnerable in school. Information obtained regarding children's skill levels from school assessment over time.

RESEARCH FUNDING AGENCY (if any):                      None.

DURATION OF PROPOSED PROJECT (please provide dates as month/year):  
Data collection by school staff; September 2009, December 2009, April 2010, July 2010  
Educational Psychologist data collection; October 2009, July 2010

DATE YOU WISH TO START DATA COLLECTION:  
September 2009.

**Please provide details on the following aspects of the research:**

1. What are your intended methods of recruitment, data collection and analysis? **[see note 1]**

Please outline (in 100-250 words) the intended methods for your project and give what detail you can. However, it is not expected that you will be able to answer fully these questions at the proposal stage.

School based data collection will take place using standardised reading assessments as already used by the school for assessment of all Year 7 students reading skills on entry to secondary school. Numeracy assessment shall be carried out by using a graded maths assessment that can be used with a whole group and by teaching staff in school. Boxall Profile data will be collated by the nurture group teacher throughout the year.

EP data collection shall take place via individual students being asked to complete questionnaires incorporating scaling activities to gain their perceptions of experiences at two different times during their first year at secondary school. These shall be anonymous. Students shall also be asked to take part in focus group discussions at the end of the year to enable more detailed collection of their views. Notes of such discussions shall be taken, again anonymously, it will also be audio recorded and annotated.

2. How will you make sure that all participants understand the process in which they are to be engaged and that they provide their voluntary and informed consent? If the study involves working with children or other vulnerable groups, how have you considered their rights and protection? **[see note 2]**

Parental consent will be obtained by school staff for the children to be part of the nurture group. Additional individually signed consent forms from parents will also be obtained for involvement in the evaluation with the EP.

A script has been written which will be read to and a copy provided for students prior to taking part in EP data collection and students shall be asked to sign this if they are happy to take part. (see attached)

3. How will you make sure that participants clearly understand their right to withdraw from the study?

The script includes information about how students can opt out part way through if they wish to and who they can tell about this.

4. Please describe how you will ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of participants. Where this is not guaranteed, please justify your approach. **[see note 3]**

Once data collected by school (Boxall Profiles, Literacy and Numeracy assessment scores) have been recorded at the end of the year then names shall be removed in all paperwork used by the EP by shredding any copies that have names on them, as with all other confidential waste at the EPS base. School will keep their original copies in the usual way under their own procedures. A coding system will be applied to ensure that no names will be needed to compare data after the project has finished.

Individual details shall not be included on any other data collection.

5. Describe any possible detrimental effects of the study and your strategies for dealing with them. **[see note 4]**

Not all vulnerable children in Year will be able to be offered a place in the nurture group due to number limitations. Decisions regarding who shall be part of this group shall be made by school staff based on the information received from primary schools.

The children involved in the group may feel under additional pressure to succeed due to having an additional numeracy assessment in comparison to other Year 7 students.

Time out of lessons for students, a study buddy system can be used to ensure that any missed learning can be reinforced.

As an employer of the Local Authority (LA) this means that any data from one of its schools will actually belong to the school and LA, therefore the level of anonymity I can guarantee is as with that of all work I do in schools. As EP for the school and researcher I will have a dual role.

6. How will you ensure the safe and appropriate storage and handling of data?

Copies of school data with names on over time shall be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the EPS in the same way as school and casework files are kept. Once this data has been collated then it shall be destroyed in the usual way.

Information held on computer shall be anonymous throughout, a coding system will be used.

7. If during the course of the research you are made aware of harmful or illegal behaviour, how do you intend to handle disclosure or nondisclosure of such information? **[see note 5]**

If there were a disclosure from any of the students this would be immediately reported to the member of staff in the school that has responsibility for Safeguarding Children in Staffordshire and then be followed up in the usual way through school procedures.

8. If the research design demands some degree of subterfuge or undisclosed research activity, how have you justified this and how and when will this be discussed with participants?

All aspects of the research shall be openly explained to participants and their parents.

9. How do you intend to disseminate your research findings to participants?

The students will be invited to join a group meeting to hear about how they had found the experience over all. It will be a brief summary of the key findings presented in such a way that is accessible to their age group. Parents may also be invited to this if they so wish.

Dissemination shall take place via a written report of the findings to the Headteacher of the school. A summary presentation will also be likely to the whole staff in the school. This may also be presented to the EPS if requested.

Notes for completion of forms EC1, EC2 and EC3

1. If your methods, methodology and /or participant group(s) alter substantially from those outlined in this submission during the course of the project, continued ethical approval by the Committee must not be assumed. Under such circumstances, you may wish to complete an updated submission for consideration by the Committee. Please contact the Chair of the Ethics Committee in the first instance for advice on how to proceed. This may be particularly appropriate for longitudinal studies where research populations and indeed content/focus can change over time.

2. Please consider the 'chains' or hierarchies of consent that may be necessary for e.g. working with children and young people. There may be a number of people / agencies / organisations who may be required to provide consent or agreement to participate. For example, project work in a Local Authority may require agreement from members of Senior Management before agencies/organisations may be approached. Involving children may then require agreement from (eg) Head teachers and parents/carers (as well as the child/young person themselves) plus professionals from other organisations.

3. This concern may arise, for example, in experimental or quasi-experimental designs where treatment is viewed as desirable and withheld from the control group. It might also arise in unpredictable ways in other intervention designs and, for example, in interview-based studies. Harm to the researcher if, for example, working with emotionally difficult subject matter or in potentially dangerous contexts should also be considered here including the forms of support that will be made available in such circumstances.

4. This may apply in circumstances where methods involve the use of e.g. video or photographs that could identify participants, or in the case of interviews where the status / job role of the interviewee will enable them to be identified by others.

5. You may wish to refer to the BERA Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research, 2004; paragraphs 27 & 28, p.8 for more information about this issue.

6. When applying for a CRB make it clear whether the check is for children or vulnerable adults or both. Also, organisations/schools/ services may have different requirements for how recently a CRB check should have been completed for it to be acceptable. The CRB recommend that a recheck is needed every 5 years for enhanced checks and 10 years for standard checks but it is worth clarifying with research partners whether they require a check that is more recent and an enhanced rather than standard disclosure.



### Timetable for Research

Appendix 4

June/July 2009	September 2009	October ½ Term 2009	December 2009	April 2010	July 2010
Boxall Profiles and latest IEPs collected from Primary schools put forward to request a place in the nurturing teaching group.	Reading data collected, as for all Year 7 students.	<i>Parental consent obtained for children to take part in the research.</i>	Boxall Profiles completed for each of the students by school staff.	Boxall Profiles completed for each of the students by school staff.	Boxall Profiles completed for each of the students by school staff.
<i>Children selected for the group based upon this information.</i>	Basic Numeracy assessments carried out.	<b>Rating scale and discussion activities carried out with students to obtain their views of school from a newcomer perspective.</b>			<b>Rating scale and discussion activities carried out with students to obtain their views of school from a newcomer perspective.</b>
Parents contacted and invited into school for informal meeting with nurturing teaching group staff.	<i>Whole staff presentation on Nurture Group principles, the purpose of this group and practical applications.</i>				<b>Focus group discussion activity to obtain general group feedback regarding being part of the nurturing group.</b>
Parental consent obtained for children to be in the group and to take part in the research.					<i>Discussions/interviews with staff to obtain feedback regarding their experiences of working with the group and plan ways forward.</i>

School staff involvement shown in normal type.

*EP & staff involvement shown in italics.* **EP Only involvement shown in bold.**

Example Sessions in The Link

Maths

Greeting – adults are present outside the door to meet the children as they arrive

Introduction - reminder of last lessons activities and key learning points for the lesson, use of a visual timetable to support the structure of the session

Warm-up game – developing basic maths skills, encouraging group participation

Core teaching element – differentiated learning tasks

Snack time – children and staff sit around a table and have a drink and biscuits/toast and have an opportunity to practice sharing, conversational skills and to talk to staff and peers about any concerns they may have

End of lesson – plenary as a whole group regarding learning and also discussion about what lesson the children have next and for the rest of the day and when they shall next be in the group

English

Greeting – adults are present outside the door to meet the children as they arrive

Introduction – reminder of last lessons activities and key learning points for the lesson, use of a visual timetable to support the structure of the session

Circle Time – use of a range of games/discussion activities within the circle to link to English topic and allow opportunities to express feelings and develop listening skills

Core teaching element – differentiated learning tasks

Paired/group games – within the classroom are a range of board games, learning games that the children can choose to play together to develop interaction skills, there is also a quiet reading area which children can go to if they choose to



End of lesson – plenary as a whole group regarding learning and also discussion about what lesson the children have next and for the rest of the day and when they shall next be in the group

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**My New School**

Please fill in this questionnaire about how you feel things are going so far in your new school. For each of the statements below use the rating scale to give your views by circling the number from 1 to 10 that you think best fits how you feel, 1 means not at all and 10 means the most it could be. If there are any other comments that you would like to make please add them at the end.



1. I feel that I belong at my new school.

Not at all *Sometimes* Very much so

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



2. Teachers treat me like a child.

Not at all *Sometimes* Very much so

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



3. Teachers teach in a different way to my primary teachers.

Not at all *Sometimes* Very much so

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. I know where my classrooms are.

Not at all *Sometimes* Very much so

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5. The work we have now is completely different to primary school.



Not at all

Sometimes



Very much so

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6. The teachers know me in school.



Not at all

Sometimes



Very much so

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

7. I am confident walking around the school.



Not at all

Sometimes



Very much so

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

8. The work we have done so far in Year 7 is similar to that in primary school.



Not at all

Sometimes



Very much so

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

9. Changing schools has been really hard.



Not at all

Sometimes



Very much so

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

10. I have a group of friends in school.



Not at all

Sometimes



Very much so

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

11. I understand what the teachers want me to do.



Not at all

Sometimes



Very much so

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

12. Having different teachers for lessons is good.



Not at all

Sometimes



Very much so

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

13. I can do the work in lessons.



Not at all

Sometimes



Very much so

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

14. I can ask the teachers if I need help.



Not at all

Sometimes



Very much so

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

15. I enjoy lessons in the The Link.



Not at all

Sometimes



Very much so

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

16. I enjoy other lessons in school.



Not at all

Sometimes



Very much so

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

17. Teachers treat me like an adult.



Not at all

Sometimes



Very much so

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

18. Overall, I think that I have settled into my new school.



Not at all

Sometimes



Very much so

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

In Year 6 I was looking forward to moving up to BVTC because ....

Some things that happened to help prepare me for moving schools were ...

It has been hard moving to my new school because ...

It has been good moving to secondary school because ...

Things that have made it easier to move to secondary school are ....

How have you enjoyed being at BVTC so far?

Other things that I would like you to know about how I am settling in to my new school:

**'My New School' Individual Comments**

**Oct -09    Jul-10**

**In Year 6 I was looking forward to moving up to BVTC because ....**

- Not a difference
- I would meet new friends, meet lovely Teachers
- The Teachers were strict
- They stuck up for the person who is being bullied (a bully?) instead of the other way around
- I was going to meet lots of new friends and lots of work
- I knew they was better lessons like DT, Cooking
- It's better than my old primary school
- Of how big the school
- I wanted to see everything the opportunity to walk around the school
- I could meet new friends
- I thought I was gonna be a man and not scared of the big kids who bully me
  
- *Of the teachers except for Miss B*
- *Of the new things I was going to discover*
- *Induction days/open night*
- *I was looking forward to meeting new friends and doing everything different*
- *There would be more lessons and make more friends*
- *Meet new friends*
- *I wanted to learn more*
- *I thought it would be good*
- *Learn some new things*
- *I was reunited with my new school mates*

**Some things that happened to help prepare me for moving schools were ...**

- My visit to the open evening really helped me see what I could become
- Transition day
- Extra visits
- Inster (inset) days
- Getting used to hard work
- Come to the school for two days and saw are Teacher
- Getting homework
- We had inset days to help me
- I met Julia and do this group with other people
- I got told by cousin
- (1 blank)

- *Meeting some of the new teachers*
- *Induction days*
- *My brother telling me about it*
- *Getting told off sometimes and produson (production) day*
- *Not think about it*
- *We did a visit to the school and take to my new friends*
- *In Y6 the work was getting harder*
- *Induction days/open night*
- *The teachers were nice*

**It has been hard moving to my new school because ...**

- Nothing?
  - I would lose all my old friends and missing all my Teachers there
  - Year 11 was going to beat me up
  - I sometimes get lost
  - Worried about the bigger kids
  - Getting used to moving around school
  - Going class to class
  - Nothing!
  - (2 blanks)
- 
- *I miss half of my friends*
  - *Nothing*
  - *Nothing*
  - *No because I was confident and brave*
  - *Because it's getting used to it*
  - *It hasn't*
  - *Nothing*
  - *I have lost some of my best friends from primary*
  - *(1 blank)*

**It has been good moving to secondary school because ...**

- I have seen some of my old mates and made some new ones
- Nothing!
- Of the new stuff
- I have grown up and stopped being a big wus
- Meeting new students
- It has longer lunch time and break times
- Met lots of new people
- The teachers are helpful more fun lessons
- Meeting new people and meeting new Teachers and having to see what lessons I have
- Nothing!



- (1 blank)
- *Do better things*
- *It has*
- *Playing games*
- *I make me feel grown up*
- *It's better than primary*
- *Better lessons like PE because we do more sports like tennis*
- *Because making new friends and doing different lessons*
- *I can learn things that I didn't know before*
- *Mrs Ps nice*

**Things that have made it easier to move to secondary school are ....**

- Nothing!
- Doing a group with this lovely teacher and have been talking about it and thinking and feelings
- Helpful teachers, fun lessons
- Having some friends already there
- In the mobile in the Link has helped us
- Getting support of teachers
- The lessons
- Nothing
- (3 blank)
- *Meeting new friends*
- *Doing the induction days and open night*
- *Came and saw what it was like*
- *I have known people that have come to Blake already*
- *Visit the school*
- *The Teachers helping me*
- *The food*
- *Nothing*
- *Meeting the teachers before*

**How have you enjoyed being at BVTC so far?**

- Yes, I have been taught new things and how to make stuff
- The lessons and lunchtimes
- It ok
- Yes
- Yes!
- Yes if I was the President I would reward them with the worlds entire objects
- Not so good
- It's ok

- (2 blank)
- *It's cool*
- *A bit*
- *The Link*
- *It's been good I like it*
- *Yes*
- *Yes*
- *It's been fun - new experience, lessons, people*
- *Yes because things are different to primary school*
- *Dancing, football*

**Other things that I would like you to know about how I am settling in to my new school:**

- No comment
- No comment
- Made new friends
- Enjoyed PE lessons
- No comment
- (6 blank)
- *None*
- *No*
- *PE and computers*
- *Nothing*
- *NA*
- *(4 blank)*

**Focus Group – Staff to read out to the group**

Today we are going to spend about half an hour in this small group to talk about how moving to secondary school is going for you. There are some questions that we would like you to answer as honestly as you can, we would like to know all of your views if you want to tell us what you think. In the group we will need to take it in turn to talk so that we can all hear what each other are saying, if you do not want to say something that is fine too. I will note down answers, but not who has said which bits, and these notes will be used as part of some research that is being done about how useful The Link has been in working with Year 7 pupils.

When we are working together in the group we need to show each other respect and not make fun of anything that other people say, or if someone does not want to join in the discussion.

If you do not want to take part in the group that is fine there are some table activities that you can do instead.

Appendix 9

**Date:**\_\_\_\_\_

**Group Circle Time Discussion**

How have you enjoyed being at BVTC so far?

It has been hard moving to my new school because ...

It has been good moving to secondary school because ...

Things that have made it easier to move to secondary school are ...

Being in The Link has been ...

Other things that I would like you to know about how I have settled in to my new school:

**Focus Group Discussion Responses**

Class divided into two smaller groups.

**End Oct '09**

**In Year 6 I was looking forward to moving up to BVTC because...**

- Better lessons, 5 different lessons each day
- Primary school was boring, better PE, in primary everyone treated me like a baby
- Nice food
- I wasn't
- In high school they stick up for the victim being bullied, they didn't at primary (experience explained)
- Teachers at our primary were very strict more strict
- Leaving school – Blake
- The teachers treat me like a proper person, they help me more

**Some things that happened to help prepare me for moving schools were ...**

- Met some teachers at Coffee afternoon, Mum worked here, induction days, see new stuff, came to Open Evening, came to see Buggy
- 4 people were picked to come to BVTC
- Having fights to defend myself
- Transition day was ok
- Came up to school on bike to get used to it after school
- Transition day a bit nervous, bigger children and school made it a little bit easier to come
- Open Evening some older kids were nice/looked nice so it helped

**It has been hard moving to my new school because ...**

- Lots of good friends went to different school
- Mum moved away from the area.
- The teachers don't help and I don't like it
- Getting detentions, getting used to them
- The uniform – it's different
- Getting lost, I kept getting lost on the first day
- Tricky getting used to the timetable – periods and 2 weeks, but get used to it.

**It has been good moving to secondary school because ...**

- More lessons – longer break times, we have snack time in The Link
- New stuff in lessons and past king
- Made lots of new friends,
- Meeting nice teachers
- More technology in lessons, more practical things in Science
- Glad to leave primary school
- The work is easier, it's boring though
- Nothing – PE is better though, more variety do better things like swimming
- I've got more friends than in primary school
- Getting used to the harder work – lots of it
- Being treated properly not like a 3 year old, more like an adult

- Lots of new friends

**Things that have made it easier to move to secondary school are ...**

- Going in Mobile 2 (link)
- Better PE, Technology
- Having relatives/friends in school already
- Having sister in Y10
- Meeting new people
- Ask people way around
- My family – telling me not to worry about it and walk away if people are nasty to me
- Coming to The Link, a little bit
- Nothing
- The people I already know here

**How have you enjoyed being at BVTC so far?.**

- Link lessons, liking PE, Art, DT, English and ICT
- Maths and Music lessons, Science practical lessons
- Nurture/ link
- Using new stuff
- Don't really like it – half the teachers are strict and tell you off for no reason and the kids, some are ok, half push away if you want to make friends
- 100%
- PE lessons, IT
- Middle /ok so far
- A little bit
- 100%, actually one million per cent this place

**Other things that I would like you to know about how I have settled in to my new school:**

- Enjoyed it
- Playing in school football team
- I like some of the teachers
- I hate this school
- The tie kills you, have to do your top button tight, I got used to it
- It's scary moving up to a bigger school because different teachers and get mixed up moving classes etc. but get used to it a little bit
- Feel settled in straight away, a bit exciting and then a bit boring, changes in different lessons and the teachers change strictness
- Blazer – get used to it
- Need key and pass to go to the toilet now, harder than primary to go

**Jul '10**

**How have you enjoyed being at BVTC so far?**

- New sports
- Dance class/extra activities
- Link time
- More variety in food
- Meeting new people and making new friends/more friends

- Hardly made new friends, some bullying, one new friend
- Talked to you like a baby at primary, better because speak to you like an adult more often
- They treat you like an adult

**It has been hard moving to my new school because ...**

- Not really – familiar with students already present
- Difficulty with some new teaching staff freedom of lunch
- Like a big step going from small school to lots of lessons
- More strict get told off more
- Detentions don't get them at primary
- The Maths -sums algebra
- More fun lessons at primary school
- English get to write stories and read books

**It has been good moving to secondary school because ...**

- Made new friends
- More social opportunities
- It makes you feel like an adult
- Got more facilities, like swimming pool
- Making new friends
- In Art get to do graffiti
- Some of the teachers can be strict but it makes you learn

**Things that have made it easier to move to secondary school are ....**

- Transition day
- Teachers giving help when stuck with the work
- Having two transition days
- Open nights
- More help off the teacher

**Other things that I would like you to know about how I have settled in to my new school:**

- Good because of the games and snacks
- Listening to music
- Circle Time
- Fun
- Play games, better than doing lessons
- Unfair on other people who aren't
- I got some new friends, can make friends and enjoy yourself
- Can have some snacks some times and do celebrations and decorations

## Example code and theme development

Focus Group Discussions (one section of the data used, also used in the coding and theme identification process were comments made on 'My New School Questionnaires' and at individual pupil interviews):

Discussion Point	Data Item	Initial Codes
In Year 6 I was looking forward to moving up to BVTC because...	There are better lessons, <u>5 different lessons</u> each day.	Different lessons
	Primary school was boring, <u>there is better PE,</u> in primary everyone treated me like a baby. <u>Nice food at high school.</u>	Lessons Better food
	I wasn't.	
	<u>In high school they stick up for the victim being bullied,</u> they didn't at primary.	Bullying
	Teachers at our primary were very strict, <u>more strict than here.</u>	Teachers different
	Leaving school (altogether).	Treated differently by teachers
	The teachers treat me like a proper person, <u>they help me more here.</u>	Getting help Different lessons
	<u>Doing new sports.</u>	
	<u>Dance class and extra activities.</u>	
	<u>Link time.</u>	The Link
Some things that happened to help prepare me for moving schools were ...	More variety in the food.	
	Meeting new people and making <u>new friends/more friends.</u>	Friendships
	I have hardly made any new friends, there has been some bullying, <u>I have one new friend.</u>	Bullying Friendships
	They talked to you like a baby at primary, it is better because <u>they speak to you like an adult</u> more often.	
	<u>They treat you like an adult.</u>	Treated differently by teachers
	<u>I met some teachers</u> at coffee afternoon and <u>Mum worked here.</u> Induction days and seeing new stuff. <u>I came to Open Evening and came to see the Buggy show.</u>	Meeting new teachers Family links Extra visits Extra visits
	Four people were picked to come to BVTC ( <u>for extra visits</u> ).	
	Having fights to defend myself.	
	<u>Transition day was ok.</u>	Extra visits Extra visits
	<u>I came up to school on my bike</u> to get used to it after school.	
On transition day I was a bit nervous, the bigger children and school, but <u>it made it a little bit easier to come.</u>	Extra visits	
<u>On Open Evening some older kids were nice,</u> they looked nice, so it helped.	Extra visits Support from	



	<p><u>Transition day.</u>  <u>Teachers giving help</u> when you are stuck with the work.  <u>Having two transition days.</u>  <u>Open nights.</u>  More help off the teacher.</p>	<p>older children  Extra visits  Teacher support</p> <p>Extra visits  Extra visits  Teacher support</p>
<p><b>It has been hard moving to my new school because ...</b></p>	<p>Lots of my <u>good friends</u> went to different school.  <u>Mum moved away</u> from the area.  <u>The teachers don't help</u> and I don't like it.  Getting <u>detentions</u>, I have had to get used to them.  <u>The uniform</u> – it's different.  <u>Getting lost</u>, I kept getting lost on the first day.  It is tricky getting used to the <u>timetable</u> – having different periods and 2 different weeks, but you get used to it.</p> <p>Not really – <u>I knew students already here.</u>  It has been difficult with some <u>new teachers</u>, but there is more freedom at lunch times.  It is like a big step going from small school to <u>lots of lessons</u>.  It is more strict, you get told off more.  <u>Detentions</u>, you don't get them at primary.  The Maths – difficult sums and algebra.  There were <u>more fun lessons at primary school</u>.  In English you get to write stories and read books.</p>	<p>Friends</p> <p>Family links  Teacher support  Detentions</p> <p>The uniform  Finding the way around  Timetable</p> <p>Knowing people there  New teachers</p> <p>Timetable</p> <p>Detentions</p> <p>Lessons</p>
<p><b>It has been good moving to secondary school because ...</b></p>	<p>More <u>lessons and longer break times</u>, we have snack time in The Link.  New stuff in <u>lessons and going to Pasta King at lunch time</u>.  I have made lots of <u>new friends</u>.  Meeting nice teachers.  More technology in <u>lessons</u> and more practical things in Science.  I was <u>glad to leave primary school</u>.  The work is easier, it's boring though.  Nothing – <u>PE is better though</u>, there is more variety and we do better things, like swimming.  I've got <u>more friends</u> than in primary school.  Getting used to the <u>harder work</u> – there is lots of it.  <u>Being treated properly</u>, not like a 3 year old, more like an adult.</p>	<p>Lessons Break / lunch times  Lessons Break / lunch times  Friends</p> <p>Lessons</p> <p>Better than primary  Lessons</p> <p>Friends  Harder work</p> <p>Treated differently</p>

	<p>Lots of <u>new friends</u>.</p> <p>I have made <u>new friends</u>.</p> <p>There are more social opportunities.</p> <p>It makes you feel <u>like an adult</u>.</p> <p>It has got more facilities, like a swimming pool.</p> <p>Making <u>new friends</u>.</p> <p>In <u>Art</u> you get to do graffiti.</p> <p>Some of the <u>teachers can be strict</u>, but it makes you learn.</p>	<p>Friends</p> <p>Friends</p> <p>Treated differently</p> <p>Friends</p> <p>Lessons</p> <p>Teachers/treated differently</p>
<p><b>Things that have made it easier to move to secondary school are ...</b></p>	<p>Going in Mobile 2 (<u>The Link</u>).</p> <p>Better PE and Technology.</p> <p>Having <u>relatives and friends</u> in the school already.</p> <p>Having a sister in Y10.</p> <p>Meeting <u>new people</u>.</p> <p>Asking people the way around.</p> <p><u>My family</u> – telling me not to worry about it and walk away if people are nasty to me.</p> <p>Coming to <u>The Link</u>, a little bit.</p> <p>Nothing.</p> <p>The people I already know here.</p> <p><u>Transition day</u>.</p> <p><u>Teachers giving help</u> when you are stuck with the work.</p> <p>Having <u>two transition days</u>.</p> <p><u>Open nights</u>.</p> <p><u>More help off the teacher</u>.</p>	<p>The Link</p> <p>Family links/known people</p> <p>New people</p> <p>Family support</p> <p>The Link</p> <p>Knowing people</p> <p>Extra visits</p> <p>Teacher support</p> <p>Extra visits</p> <p>Teacher support</p>
<p><b>How have you enjoyed being at BVTC so far?</b></p>	<p><u>The Link lessons</u>, I also like PE, Art, DT, English and ICT.</p> <p>I like Maths and Music lessons, Science practical lessons.</p> <p>Going to Nurture, <u>The Link</u>.</p> <p>Using new stuff.</p> <p>I don't really like it – <u>half the teachers are strict and tell you off for no reason</u> and the kids, some are ok, <u>half push away if you want to make friends</u>.</p> <p>I like it 100%.</p> <p>I like <u>PE lessons and IT</u>.</p> <p>It is in the middle /ok so far.</p> <p>A little bit.</p> <p>100%, actually one million per cent I like this place.</p>	<p>The Link</p> <p>Different lessons</p> <p>The Link</p> <p>Teachers/treated differently</p> <p>Friends</p> <p>Lessons</p>
<p><b>Other things that I would like you to know about how I have</b></p>	<p>I have enjoyed it.</p> <p><u>Playing in the school football team</u>.</p> <p>I <u>like some of the teachers</u>.</p>	<p>Sports Teachers</p>

<b>settled in to my new school:</b>	<p>I hate this school. The <u>tie kills</u> you, have to do your top button tight, I got used to it. It's scary moving up to a bigger school because <u>different teachers</u> and get mixed up <u>moving classes etc.</u> but get used to it a little bit. Feel settled in straight away, a bit exciting and then a bit boring, <u>changes in different lessons and the teachers change strictness.</u> <u>The blazer;</u> you get used to it. You need a key and pass to <u>go to the toilet</u> now; it is harder than at primary to go.</p> <p>It is good because of the <u>games and snacks.</u> Listening to music. Circle Time. It is fun. Playing <u>games</u>, it is better than doing lessons. It is unfair on other people who aren't in it. I got <u>some new friends</u>, you can make friends and enjoy yourself. You can have some <u>snacks</u> sometimes and do celebrations and decorations.</p>	<p>Uniform</p> <p>Different teachers Timetable</p> <p>Timetable Different teachers Uniform Use of the toilet</p> <p>Liked games and snack</p> <p>Friends</p>
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Initial Codes:

All codes identified	Codes linked	Amalgamated codes	Theme development and example links to Tobbell's (2003) themes
Different lessons Lessons Better food Bullying Teachers different Treated differently by teachers Getting help Different lessons The Link Friendships Bullying Friendships Treated differently by teachers	Lessons / different lessons Lunch Bullying Different teachers Treated differently Help The Link Friendships	Friendships Extra visits / having a map Family links / knowing people Work Homework Meeting new teachers The Link / Circle Time Support Bullying Food / lunchtimes Safe places Bullying Teachers Lessons / timetable	Friendships Preparation for transfer Small group support Safe place to go Bullying Work / homework Teachers
Meeting new teachers Family links			

<p>Extra visits Extra visits Extra visits Extra visits Extra visits Support from older children Extra visits Teacher support Extra visits Extra visits Teacher support</p>	<p>New teachers Family links Extra visits Support from older children Teacher support Friendships Detentions Uniform Finding way around Timetable Knowing people Lessons</p>	<p>Finding the way around Treated differently to primary Detentions Better / worse than primary school Break / lunch times The uniform</p>	<p>Lessons Progress Support Comparison to primary school</p>
<p>Friends Family links Teacher support Detentions The uniform Finding the way around Timetable Knowing people there New teachers Timetable Detentions Lessons</p>			<p><u>School as Community</u> e.g. Friends Knowing people Family links Bullying</p>
<p>Lessons Break / lunch times Lessons Break / lunch times Friends Lessons Better than primary Lessons Friends Harder work Treated differently Friends Friends Treated differently Friends Lessons Teachers/treated differently</p>	<p>Lessons Break/lunch times Friends Better than primary Treated differently Harder work Teachers</p>		<p><u>Adult or Child?</u> e.g. Treated differently Better than primary</p>
<p>The Link Family links/known people New people Family support The Link Knowing people Extra visits</p>	<p>The Link Family support/links Knowing people there Extra visits Teacher support</p>		<p><u>What Makes a Good Teacher?</u> e.g. Teacher support</p> <p><u>The Learning Experience</u> e.g. Different lessons Timetable The Link</p> <p><u>Feeling Lost</u> e.g. Extra visits The Link</p>

Teacher support Extra visits Teacher support			
The Link Different lessons The Link Teachers/treated differently Friends Lessons	The Link Teachers Treated differently Friends Lessons		
Sports Teachers Uniform Different teachers Timetable Timetable Different teachers Uniform Use of the toilet Liked games and snack Friends	Lessons Teachers Uniform Different teachers Timetable Games and snack (The Link) Friends		

## Appendix 12

### Staff Questions Regarding the Year 7 Nurture Group

Date:

Present:

1. What challenges had you anticipated in the setting up and running of a Year 7 Nurture Group?
2. What do you think has worked well with the group?
3. What challenges arose that you had not anticipated?
4. What do you think the outcomes have been for the children?
5. What do you think the outcomes have been for the school as a whole?

Any other comments:

## Appendix 13

### Interview Questions: Assistant Headteacher / Pastoral Coordinator

1. What challenges had you anticipated in the setting up and running of a Year 7 Nurture Group?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What do you think has worked well with the group?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What challenges arose that you had not anticipated?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What do you think the outcomes have been for the children?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What do you think the outcomes have been for the school as a whole?

Any other comments:

**Interview with the Pastoral Coordinator**

**Jul '10**

**1. What challenges had you anticipated in the setting up and running of a Year 7 Nurture Group?**

- I wasn't involved in the set up. It was already in place when I started at the school.

**2. What do you think has worked well with the group?**

- The small group has been a positive and having the TA with them has worked well for the kids in there.
- I think that they feel safe and comfortable in there.
- More differentiation of work than in other subjects.

**3. What challenges arose that you had not anticipated?**

- There was not really a member of staff that didn't mix well with the kids there but not the actual group (as a whole).
- There is one particular teacher the children haven't got on with and there have been problems (not the NG teacher).

**4. What do you think the outcomes have been for the children?**

- Overall it has been positive for the children.
- One particular child, a Child in Care, has benefitted from the group and is doing much better now.
- The ASD child would not have coped without the nurture group and wouldn't have come on with learning as she has this year.

**5. What do you think the outcomes have been for the school as a whole?**

- Not sure that all the staff have understood why the children are in there.
- Some of the staff think it is the naughty kids in the group and don't understand it.

**Any other comments:**

- It has not really made a difference to me as Pastoral Co-ordinator, I have still been dealing with the kids and issues that arise.
- If the nurture group teacher had had them all the time they would have been fine, with other subject teachers there have been more problems.



**Assistant Headteacher**

**Jul '10**

**1. What challenges had you anticipated in the setting up and running of a Year 7 Nurture Group?**

- Had seen models in other schools, but each setting is different, it is a question of whether to replicate or adapt.
- Getting parents on board, coffee morning did well.
- Re-integration needs to be considered for the future, should have been a 3 year plan.
- A lot of good work will be lost.
- A group with so many issues in one place, ASD, plus various other problems such as parents died or not living with parents.

**2. What do you think has worked well with the group?**

- Relationships with staff will be ongoing.
- The flexibility of activities.
- Mobile- separate and being able to go outside on the grass.
- CTs enthusiasm and variety of activities.
- Tutor group and main lesson links have gone all the way through.

**3. What challenges arose that you had not anticipated?**

- None really.
- Training issue for all staff, how to handle children with difficulties. Having a range of strategies and to know the children and differentiate for them. Could learn from NG activities, from seeing it.
- Difficult for staff to have children back in their classes at the end of the year.

**4. What do you think the outcomes have been for the children?**

- Been able to build good relationships with staff.
- Comfortable small group.
- Providing a bolt-hole and the children have learnt at their own pace.
- Enjoyed 'feeling special', not seen as a barrier to the group.

**5. What do you think the outcomes have been for the school as a whole?**

- Saved a lot of problems, if they had been in mainstream from day one they would have struggled.
- Staff not skilled up enough to cope.
- Been able to identify the needs, build up relationships.
- Got bonds with parents that would not have had due to the contact with them.

**Any other comments:**

- Reasons for ceasing the group next year – due to Teacher priorities there is a need for a mainstream Maths Teacher, the NG Teacher is one. However didn't look at other resources to be able to continue, such as using a HLTA.

## Appendix 16

### Student Questions Regarding the Year 7 Nurture Group

Date:

Present:

#### **Tell me about how moving to BVTC has been for you?**

*Prompt questions;*

- *What did you look forward to?*
- *What did you worry about?*
- *What was it like – the first day; the first few weeks?*
- *What helped you manage and fit in? (use flash card with prompt words to help)*
- *How did you find your way around?*
- *How did you find having new teachers?*
- *Overall, how would you say the move to Blake Valley High has gone?*

*Rating scale shown to child;*

*Really bad*

*Great*

*(couldn't have been worse!)*

*(couldn't have been better!)*

|-----|-----|

#### **What positives have there been?**

- *Have you enjoyed meeting new friends/doing new subjects?*
- *Has the work been better/easier?*
- *Do you feel treated differently to how you were at your last school?*

#### **What negatives have there been?**

- *Have you found it hard making new friends/doing new subjects?*
- *Has the work been too hard?*
- *Do you feel safe?*
- *Do you feel treated differently to how you were at your last school?*

#### **What do you think has helped you?**

- *Have some staff been really helpful?*
- *Friends/siblings at school?*
- *The Link*
- *Having safe places to go?*

#### **Tell me about your time in The Link.**

- *Have you enjoyed it?*
- *How has being there made you feel?*
- *Have you made friends there?*
- *In what ways has it been different to other lessons?*

#### **How do you think Year 8 will be?**

- *What are you looking forward to?*
- *Is there anything you are worried about?*
- *How will be different to Year 7?*

**Is there anything that you would like to tell a new Year 7 next year that would help them with starting at BVTC?**

**Individual Pupil Interview with BJ**

**1. Tell me about how moving to BVTC has been for you? Rating prompt used in addition to key prompt questions to aid discussion.**

Ok overall, about a 5.

I was looking forward to making new friends.

I was worried about walking in the corridors with the big kids.

The first few weeks were good, I don't know what helped.

Some of the kids were telling me where to go.

Some of the new lessons were good.

**2. What positives have there been?**

I don't know really.

Being treated differently, new friends.

I do feel safe in school.

**3. What negatives have there been?**

I don't like the timetable because you get double lessons.

The work – some of it has been hard.

No difference in how you are treated (compared to last school).

**4. What do you think has helped you?**

Having TAs in some of my lessons.

The Link – just a fun lesson that I like, it helps to cooperate and the staff are good.

Safe places to go are like the computer room and in the canteen with friends.

**5. Tell me about your time in The Link.**

Yes The Link is fun, you play games and get friends in The Link.

It is different, better and it's more fun than the other lessons.

**6. How do you think Year 8 will be?**

It's gonna be different because we might not have Nurture - one of my favourite lessons.

Nothing worries me, just the work's going to be different.

**7. Is there anything that you would like to tell a new Year 7 next year that would help them with starting at BVTC?**

Say – just good stuff that you do, like the fun lessons you get to have, like Science when you can go outside.

Just tell them not to worry.

**Individual Pupil Interview with AC**

**1. Tell me about how moving to BVTC has been for you? Rating prompt used in addition to key prompt questions to aid discussion.**

Overall it has been ok, I would rate it at a 5.

I was looking forward to having fun. Nothing worried me, at first? I can't remember.

**2. What positives have there been?**

Lunchtimes and break, PE is good.

The work is hard and easy.

Yes, I am treated differently to primary school, like more grown up.

I have made new friends.

**3. What negatives have there been?**

English.

I feel safe.

**4. What do you think has helped you?**

The Link and support in classes.

**5. Tell me about your time in The Link.**

You get to play games and eat snacks. It is good, I liked it more than other lessons, it was funner.

**6. How do you think Year 8 will be?**

Not sure, not worried. Yes it's different, harder work.

**7. Is there anything that you would like to tell a new Year 7 next year that would help them with starting at BVTC?**

Nothing, can't think.

**Individual Pupil Interview with RM**

**1. Tell me about how moving to BVTC has been for you? Rating prompt used in addition to key prompt questions to aid discussion.**

It has probably been a 10.

Looked forward to – meeting new friends and having new lessons.

Worried about – getting lost, but I can do it, it still feels the same but I can get my way round.

At first it was petrifying, very very scary but after the first week was a bit better. By Christmas it felt completely different.

Now the Teachers are very good and the lessons are too.

**2. What positives have there been?**

Meeting new friends and new Teachers and doing different lessons.

Breaks and lunchtimes have been quite good.

Going home is one of the best bits.

Yes, 100% feel treated differently from my old school, I have been given lots of opportunities.

I've been responded to when my other school didn't, it's better.

The work is fun, sometimes it is difficult but I like a challenge.

**3. What negatives have there been?**

Nothing really, yes I feel safe.

**4. What do you think has helped you?**

Being given a map of the school, knowing a few people and people showing me around.

The staff, Mrs H and Mrs S (NG Teacher and TA). The Link, it has been ok but I am not sure of it helped, 50-50 really.

**5. Tell me about your time in The Link.**

Yes it has been different, less writing which is good.

The classroom, the size of the group was smaller, much less than the other lessons.

I am not sure of it was better, I'm not bothered really.

Making friends was the same, no difference.

**6. How do you think Year 8 will be?**

Exciting, I am looking forward to it definitely.

I am looking forward to meeting new friends, a different timetable and experiences to Year 7.

I am looking forward to it a lot, there is nothing worrying about it.

**7. Is there anything that you would like to tell a new Year 7 next year that would help them with starting at BVTC?**

Just be normal and be yourself. Ignore the feeling, you've got to take note and don't let it get in the way of it.

It has gone fast, get comfortable and before you know it you are in another year and another Tutor.

**Individual Pupil Interview with KW**

**1. Tell me about how moving to BVTC has been for you? Rating prompt used in addition to key prompt questions to aid discussion.**

Overall setting in has been great and stuff.

Friends? – I have a couple, in The Nurture Group mostly (some named) but his has not been so good. I was worried that I would get lost and not make any friends.

The induction days helped.

Overall I would rate it about a 9 or 10 out of 10.

**2. What positives have there been?**

The nest things are ore facilities and stuff.

I have enjoyed PE.

I had confidence at the beginning but not so good now, I have been bullied and stuff.

**3. What negatives have there been?**

I don't feel a safe as I did before because people are doing things, I'm petrified and need to build my confidence up again.

I had to do detentions, it's not fair for the good ones, it was the boys. We had to write from the board and stay in 10 minutes when it was the boys and it was boiling hot.

People coming around me outside in the corridor and large classrooms, there has been name-calling, I was petrified, they were shouting down my ear which upset me.

**4. What do you think has helped you?**

IT and Nurture are the only things that I feel safe in.

The timetable and stuff have helped.

At break times and lunchtimes I go to a member of staff who makes me feel safe and we play fun games.

The Link – like fun staff. Things have gone 'hay-wol' outside, people are bullying and stuff. The Link has been better. I would rather stay in the Link all day.

I have made a few new friends in The Link.

In Tutor people used to come round me, I was petrified and reacted to them. It is more safe outside The Link there's not loads of kids outside the mobile.

We had to get ready for the move into Year 8 – into different groups, it is good in a way but the Teachers are more strict, I feel like I am in trouble when the Teachers shout.

**5. Tell me about your time in The Link.**

We've enjoyed it and played games, we had snack because there were two nurture lessons so we had snack and then played games.

It was different because The Link is more fun, normal lessons you feel like falling asleep. You make new friends and stuff.

**6. How do you think Year 8 will be?**

Year 8 is going to be very nerve-racking, not as bad as Year 7, it has not been very lucky but it's supposed to be a lucky number, I've got more experience now.

I am hoping the new Year 7 will be nice.

The children are more mature at B than Primary.

Things being even worse than in Year 7 but Mum's sorting things out. People know I've got a disability now, someone said something, I'd rather she never met me who said it.

**7. Is there anything that you would like to tell a new Year 7 next year that would help them with starting at BVTC?**

Don't be like me and be confident, I've got no confidence in myself.  
I can't think of anything else now.

## Appendix 21

### Parent Questions Regarding the Year 7 Nurture Group

Pupil: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Present: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What did you think ---- was going to find hard about moving to secondary school?

*Prompt questions;*

- *Coping with the larger building?*
- *Different lessons / work?*
- *More staff?*
- *Meeting new children?*
- *Being treated more like an adult?*

2. How do you think ----- has coped overall with Year 7?

*Prompt questions;*

- *Socially?*
- *In terms of the work/lessons?*
- *Teachers?*
- *Independence skills?*

3. What positives have there been?

*Prompt questions;*

- *What have they done well at / enjoyed?*

4. What negatives have there been?

*Prompt questions;*

- *What have they found hard /not enjoyed?*

5. What do you think has helped ----- to settle in ?

*Prompt questions;*

- *Friends / siblings?*
- *The Link?*
- *Staff/SEN Support?*

6. Socially, how has ----- developed over the last year?

*Prompt questions;*

- *Friendships?*
- *Confidence?*
- *Knowing Teachers?*

7. Why do you think this?

8. How do you think Year 8 will be for ----- ?

*Prompt questions;*

- *What are they looking forward to?*
- *Any concerns?*

Any other comments:



## Appendix 22

### Parent Views – Interview with BJs Mother

Jul '10

**6. What did you think ---- was going to find hard about moving to secondary school?**

- A bigger group, he does not cope with big groups.
- His concentration, he lacks it.

**7. How do you think ----- has coped overall with Year 7?**

- Very well, better than I thought.  
He is a bit more outspoken now, wouldn't ask but does more now. He has come out of his shell a bit more, not loads but a big achievement.
- Now he can go to staff and say he can't cope – the SEN and nurture group staff.

**8. What positives have there been?**

- He is talking to me about school, he never used to before
- He made an England hat in the nurture group; it was brilliant, he was very proud of it, he designed it himself.

**9. What negatives have there been?**

- B is not very good with homework, it is a struggle.
- I have told him if he doesn't do it will face the consequences, he sees it as he has done school all day.
- It is up to him, but I try to encourage him.
- He gets upset, he is a very emotional child, sensitive.
- He don't like Sports Day.

**10. What do you think has helped ----- to settle in?**

- The teachers – that bit more support.
- The smaller nurture group has helped him.
- He wouldn't have coped at all just in the big groups at first.

**11. Socially, how has ----- developed over the last year?**

- As far as I know he has made friends, he calls for someone before school, he wouldn't before.
- Will talk about other children but I don't know them.

**12. Why do you think this?**

- I don't know, didn't have so much help at primary but did in the Birmingham schools.
- The help and support has helped a lot.
- He lacks concentration and gets bored easily, apart from on the Wii, he needs a challenge.
- He has now eaten in the canteen a bit, that's much better.

**13. How do you think Year 8 will be for ----- ?**

- Not a problem for me.
- I think the work will be harder for him.
- No other worries than lack of concentration, gets bored very easily at home as well.
- As long as he knows he can still go and see support staff. He needs to know staff, he doesn't talk to people he does not know.

- **Any other comments:**
- The school trip is next week, he can't go due to money difficulties, not sure what he will do for the day.
- He can clam up in group situation, BJs better in 1:1 situations
- There has been days when he has not wanted to come – only the odd day he does have poorly tummy at times.
- Overall I am impressed with him.

**Parent Views – Interview with ACs Mother**

Jul '10

**6. What did you think ---- was going to find hard about moving to secondary school?**

- Everything because of his learning difficulties.
- He could have done with another 12 months of primary, but that was not a good idea.
- He has language problems and doesn't like groups of people, he gets nervous in large groups

**7. How do you think ----- has coped overall with Year 7?**

- He can't accept when he has done something wrong sometimes, generally he doesn't know, he was the same at primary schools and gets into trouble.
- The problems are ongoing with learning
- He has coped very well considering he lost his Dad 12 months ago and with moving house 8 months ago as well, his friends are not local now.
- He has had a lot to cope with.

**8. What positives have there been?**

- He likes the school but found it hard to move there.
- A had some friends from before. He is a quiet lad but goes early to play with his mates at the school which is good.
- He has gone to the Drayton Manor trip - I am surprised that he has but his friends were going.

**9. What negatives have there been?**

- Has been in trouble for truancy and got detentions.
- Playing up and then admitting he does not understand.
- He finds it difficult with the work and does not like to say so and accept help, he is the same at home
- He plays up – follows others.
- One incident where he was blamed for something he didn't do and answered back to a teacher and got sent home.

**10. What do you think has helped ----- to settle in?**

- Small groups, he copes much better. He does not cope in the bigger settings.
- The Link has been better, he works better and will try – in the bigger groups he struggles and plays up more because he can't cope.

**11. Socially, how has ----- developed over the last year?**

- He is now going out with friends much more, he used to stay in his room.
- A still needs coaxing to do this.
- He tends to be a follower.
- He does go into school early to play with friends by himself.

**12. Why do you think this?**

- Confidence a bit, but still not good, he needs to know that his friends will be there.
- He needs pushing to join in still.

**13. How do you think Year 8 will be for ----- ?**

- A will still need support for learning.
- Behaviour, being silly when he can't cope in the big class.
- He needs the help as much as he can.
- Has no sense of time or danger still
- He worries about change, likes routine.

**Any other comments:**

- I appreciate the support.
- The teachers need to know that he does not understand.
- Worried about Sports Day tomorrow he is nervous, doesn't want me to come and watch.

Jul '10

**14. What did you think ---- was going to find hard about moving to secondary school?**

- I was not really worried about him changing schools as it is big, it's a better school

**15. How do you think ----- has coped overall with Year 7?**

- He has really settled down quite well.
- Parents Evening- good reports off most teachers, apart from one where he had been playing around in class, all the rest were good.

**16. What positives have there been?**

- Getting on better now than he did at primary school.

**17. What negatives have there been?**

- Concerned about his writing, it is untidy he could improve it.
- He finds Maths hard, he's not doing so well at that.

**18. What do you think has helped ----- to settle in?**

- They help him more than they did in primary school, have got more time for him and explain it when he doesn't understand.

**19. Socially, how has ----- developed over the last year?**

- R's got one friend mostly, he knew him before at primary.
- He does talk about other children's names.

**20. Why do you think this?**

- He seems to talk about different children, tells me about them but still mostly the one boy he seems to play with.

**21. How do you think Year 8 will be for ----- ?**

- He has not really said about it.
- No concerns but he is easily led, would like him to make other friends, he can be silly with N and is now in the same classes for English and Humanities (not the nurture group).

**Any other comments:**

- Has said he likes it at BVTC.

**Parent Views – Interview with KW's Parents**

Jul '10

**1. What did you think ---- was going to find hard about moving to secondary school?**

- It is a shame because nobody knew she had ASD, a girl told everyone and then called her names etc.
- The size of the school, because she gets lost easily

**2. How do you think ----- has coped overall with Year 7?**

- Mainly not lessons that has been a problem, it's being bullied
- She has coped generally ok, change in staff not a problem
- Awareness not enough out there, need more understanding for other children with ASD

**3. What positives have there been?**

- Has made some new friends
- Coped with different staff, her writing is much better now, she has done really well

**4. What negatives have there been?**

- Friendship changes
- Support – staff not always dealing with it (problems with other students) TA not always acting on it not good relationship with one TA
- Changing from lessons, bigger kids stopping her at times, we have told HT about it. Name-calling
- In the classroom she doesn't need the distractions of the other children picking on her

**5. What do you think has helped ----- to settle in?**

- Speaking to parents a lot, was doing great at first
- Small group has helped

**6. Socially, how has ----- developed over the last year?**

- At first made new friends, has still got some but they do turn on her at times, one particular girl caused a problem
- Gets on with other teachers, has coped with more teachers to get used to

**7. Why do you think this?**

- Not really about the size of the groups, it's the particular children
- One boy in The Link has been very nice to her, a nice boy never said anything nasty

**8. How do you think Year 8 will be for ----- ?**

- Nothing we just want her left alone, if they are not her friends back off
- They need to understand her problems

**Any other comments:**

- We are really proud of her school reports, we never dreamt in a million years that she would get reports like here – excellent and good
- Problems need to be sorted out, they have not been. Detentions they are not bothered about it and still do it

## Appendix 26

### Final Staff Questions Regarding Individual Children

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Present: \_\_\_\_\_

Focus child: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What did you know about this child prior to them starting?
  - *Family background*
  - *Problems at previous school*
2. Do they have SEN?
  - a. *Code of Practice stage – is the same now as when they started?*
  - b. *Areas of difficulty*
3. What has their attendance been like over the year?
  - a. *Termly, any patterns of absence*
4. Are there any recorded behaviour incidents?
  - a. *Timing / clusters*
  - b. *Nature of the problem*
5. How did they present in the group?
  - a. *Participation*
  - b. *Engagement/behaviour*
  - c. *Social relationships/integration/isolation/rejection*
6. How have they presented in other lessons?
  - a. *Mixing with a range of children*
  - b. *Participation*
  - c. *Engagement/behaviour*
  - d. *Clinging to staff/Link children*
7. What have been the enabling factors for them?
  - a. *Helped them to cope/do well*
8. What have been the vulnerability factors for them?
  - a. *Hindered their progress*
9. What do you think they have gained from being in the group?
  - a. *Socially*
  - b. *Academically*
  - c. *Helping to move to secondary school*

Any other comments;

## Appendix 27

### Final Staff Questions Regarding Individual Pupils

Date: 16.7.10

Focus child: BJ

Present: SENCo, Teacher, TA (from nurture group)

#### **1. What did you know about this child prior to them starting?**

- *Family background*
- *Problems at previous school*

BJ had moved from Birmingham. AT induction day he went missing, he was late and crying. He seemed very vulnerable and may be bullied.

#### **2. Do they have SEN?**

- *Code of Practice stage – is this the same now as when they started?*
- *Areas of difficulty*

At School Action Plus for learning (Moderate Learning Difficulties)

#### **3. What was their attendance been like over the year?**

- *Termly, any patterns of absence*

Good, he had the odd day off. He was off when it was Parents Evening, this seemed planned.

#### **4. Are there any recorded behaviour incidents?**

- *Timing / clusters*
- *Nature of the problem*

One incident of defiance (19.3.10) in DT, he ran off with a group. We were surprised, it was out of character. BJ is easily led and followed. He has 357 merits.

#### **5. How did they present in the group?**

- *Participation*
- *Engagement / behaviour*
- *Social relationships / integration / isolation / rejection*

He joined in but can be quiet. BJ is popular with one of the lads. He has developed more confidence and joined in well.

#### **6. How have they presented in other lessons?**

- *Mixing with a range of children*
- *Participation*
- *Engagement / behaviour*
- *Clinging to staff / Link children*

He has been quiet, but no concerns. Excellent feedback from staff across the board.

#### **7. What have been the enabling factors for them?**



- *Helped them to cope / do well*

Being in the small group, he has been able to make friends in a safe environment. He now talks much more. He could have been vulnerable and picked on.

**8. What have been the vulnerability factors?**

- *Hindered their progress*

A lack of confidence and also some eating issues.

**9. What do you think they have gained from being in the group?**

- *Socially*
- *Academically*
- *Helping to move to secondary school*

His confidence has grown and made friends. Now he has dinner some days. The others have got to know him.

**Any other comments;**

A CAF was been set up because of concerns with eating. The School Nurse, Head of Year and EP were involved; this has now closed.

## Appendix 28

### Final Staff Questions Regarding Individual Pupils

Date: 16.7.10

Focus child: AC

Present: SENCo, Teacher, TA (from nurture group)

#### **1. What did you know about this child prior to them starting?**

- *Family background*
- *Problems at previous school*

His dad had died recently. AC had a sister in school. He had been seen by CAMHS.

#### **2. Do they have SEN?**

- *Code of Practice stage – is this the same now as when they started?*
- *Areas of difficulty*

He was at School Action but changed to School Action Plus in 9.9.09 this was for Learning / Language difficulties. Speech and Language Therapy were involved with AC.

#### **3. What was their attendance been like over the year?**

- *Termly, any patterns of absence*

He had odd days off, these were quite genuine, e.g. an ear infection. It was not because he did not want to come to school.

#### **4. Are there any recorded behaviour incidents?**

- *Timing / clusters*
- *Nature of the problem*

52 recorded incidents for; verbal abuse, threatening, disruption, teasing, silly noises, giggling, not doing DT, no homework, being confrontational. In certain lesson there were problems, especially English – it is not a good mix with one other boy in the group.

#### **5. How did they present in the group?**

- *Participation*
- *Engagement / behaviour*
- *Social relationships / integration / isolation / rejection*

He was reluctant to share his ideas and thoughts. He will not show his feelings at all, he did start to at one point but in the last few weeks has stopped and is now more disruptive. AC has developed a good relationship with the TA. AC is now good at working with 1:1, he can be quite competitive. He is not as good in the larger group.

#### **6. How have they presented in other lessons?**

- *Mixing with a range of children*
- *Participation*
- *Engagement / behaviour*
- *Clinging to staff / Link children*

AC hates English, one teacher in particular. It is low-level disruptive behaviour which is ongoing. He is worse in large groups; he managed in the smaller group. In music there is a good teacher but he plays up – he doesn't want to express himself / be creative in front of others.

**7. What have been the enabling factors for them?**

- *Helped them to cope / do well*

The smaller group, with the opportunity to play games and having 1:1 interaction with other students. Having the TA in other lessons.

**8. What have been the vulnerability factors?**

- *Hindered their progress*

He is quite good at maths. His literacy skills are poor. His attitude, he will not always engage. He will build up and the 'explode' at times.

**9. What do you think they have gained from being in the group?**

- *Socially*
- *Academically*
- *Helping to move to secondary school*

Socially, he has made friends and started to go out now. Support and consistency with staff. AC is quite popular in the group, he is building relationships with staff but has trust issues, it takes time.

**Any other comments;**

He may need a statutory assessment. The EP is involved regarding his learning and behaviour issues.

## Appendix 29

### Final Staff Questions Regarding Individual Pupils

Date: 16.7.10

Focus child: RM

Present: SENCo, Teacher, TA (from nurture group)

#### **1. What did you know about this child prior to them starting?**

- *Family background*
- *Problems at previous school*

He is Diabetic and so staff were keen for him not to feel under pressure and have easy access to First Aid. He has a pass to get out of lessons. He was anxious about joining the nurture group (he also has SEN) but settled straight away.

#### **2. Do they have SEN?**

- *Code of Practice stage – is this the same now as when they started?*
- *Areas of difficulty*

School Action for behavioural, emotional and social problems, records showed low-level disruption and some difficulties with learning, especially maths.

#### **3. What was their attendance been like over the year?**

- *Termly, any patterns of absence*

He had good attendance.

#### **4. Are there any recorded behaviour incidents?**

- *Timing / clusters*
- *Nature of the problem*

There are two recorded incidents; one for defiance in DT (19.5.10) and the other for disruptive behaviour (7.5.10). There is also a recorded incident of RM being picked on by another pupil (25.3.10). He has 433 merits and points for positive behaviour.

#### **5. How did they present in the group?**

- *Participation*
- *Engagement / behaviour*
- *Social relationships / integration / isolation / rejection*

He engaged well after not wanting to be in the group at first. He has not got on so well with the boys in the group. RM has interacted and taken part in activities; he can be reluctant to join but then does. He has developed good relationships with staff.

#### **6. How have they presented in other lessons?**

- *Mixing with a range of children*
- *Participation*
- *Engagement / behaviour*
- *Clinging to staff / Link children*

He is not really seen in other lessons, there are no concerns reported.

**7. What have been the enabling factors for them?**

- *Helped them to cope / do well*

Being in the small group, so he has not been missed, and having the support. Being able to build positive relationships.

**8. What have been the vulnerability factors?**

- *Hindered their progress*

Nothing.

**9. What do you think they have gained from being in the group?**

- *Socially*
- *Academically*
- *Helping to move to secondary school*

He has made good friendships, one particular friend and his confidence has grown.

**Any other comments;**

None.

## Appendix 30

### Final Staff Questions Regarding Individual Pupils

Date: 16.7.10

Focus child: KW

Present: SENCo, Teacher, TA (from nurture group)

#### **1. What did you know about this child prior to them starting?**

- *Family background*
- *Problems at previous school*

She is on the Autistic Spectrum. KW can be challenging and go off on a tangent. She has difficulties with relationships. The relationship with her parents at her last school was not easy. At home things are not easy; she takes in views from there and gets anxious about them.

#### **2. Do they have SEN?**

- *Code of Practice stage – is this the same now as when they started?*
- *Areas of difficulty*

She has a statement for ASD with 15 hours support and lunchtime support in it.

#### **3. What was their attendance been like over the year?**

- *Termly, any patterns of absence*

Good.

#### **4. Are there any recorded behaviour incidents?**

- *Timing / clusters*
- *Nature of the problem*

Two incidents of assault are recorded with pupils (14.3.10 & 15.7.10) and an incident of verbal abuse (30.6.10). There is bullying of KW reported. She has 521 merits and also won Lead Learner awards from the SEN department, Maths and Science.

#### **5. How did they present in the group?**

- *Participation*
- *Engagement / behaviour*
- *Social relationships / integration / isolation / rejection*

During the first term, until February, she was a model student in eh group. As the year has gone on has become slightly more negative. She has generally engaged and has good relationships with staff. She has made friends with one girl and one particular boy in the group.

#### **6. How have they presented in other lessons?**

- *Mixing with a range of children*
- *Participation*
- *Engagement / behaviour*
- *Clinging to staff / Link children*

She has coped so far, she has always been in the large Science group. If it is an organised classroom she copes. KW doesn't like the noise; she is more sensitive to it.

**7. What have been the enabling factors for them?**

- *Helped them to cope / do well*

The small group, having a safe place to go. Having TA support around the school full-time. If KW could have been full-time (in the nurture group), with the same teacher, she would have coped better.

**8. What have been the vulnerability factors?**

- *Hindered their progress*

She often gets tired. She can get very loud / anxious / worked up about things. She is bringing things in from home and will not let it go. The corridors and the whole school has been harder for her, she perceives bullying there. KW takes any slight personally. Stopping the nurture group / reducing session has meant he has had to cope with lots of support teachers and cover lessons, which causes problems for KW. There has been lots of change but this is not the only issue.

**9. What do you think they have gained from being in the group?**

- *Socially*
- *Academically*
- *Helping to move to secondary school*

The opportunity to express herself and get things of her chest in Circle Time. To be able to share things she has always verbally done this. The security and support / consistency. One friendship has been good (within the nurture group), social interaction using games etc. have helped.

**Any other comments;**

Concerns about the incidents in the last week, there have been three. She would benefit from similar provision next year. Her perceptions of bullying at home and school are a problem.

**Staff Questions regarding the group over time**  
**Teacher, TA and SENCo**

**1. What challenges had you anticipated in setting up and running the group?**

End Oct '09

- TA approached quite late
- T to ease transition, expecting half behaviour and half ability difficulties in terms of needs, a range of individual needs, which is what we have got.
- Range of abilities likely.
- Unsure how two children with ASD will be because their needs are so different, not sure how they will be and react to things.
- Behaviour – concerned about being consistent with the rest of school.

Feb '10

- *Staffing continuity was an issue at first and finding the right room.*
- *Consistency of staff – not ideal but seems to be working. Would have been better still with CT and TA in all of the sessions.*

**2. Other challenges that were not anticipated?**

End Oct '09

- Timetable ended up changed at the last minute to the detriment of the students, more Teachers now.
- One child excluded – NG staff were not included in the process, she had been doing well in The Link and had built a good relationship.
- T – we don't always get messages from issues in the rest of school, TA picks things up at times.
- One child now diagnosed with Dyslexia, problems at home and may now leave the area.
- At times some of them need to be mothered, eg. One day a boy was really muddy and needed help in getting sorted.

Feb '10

- *One permanent exclusion was disappointing, there was a lack of coordination/communication between Link and other staff. We could have worked with her.*
- *The room – has been a positive being separate to the main school, initially seen as a problem.*
- *Boxalls done by Y6 Teachers – not easy/good comparison to Y7 ones? Next year may be better to do early in Y7 then continuity by staff.*

Jul-10

- Transition – 3<sup>rd</sup> Term back into mainstream for Humanities for the more able students, some also in Maths (L4s) and re done English groups.
- Behaviour has deteriorated in other classes.
- Children are not coping – one has asked to come back to The Link.

**3. How well has it worked (so far)?**

End Oct '09

- Small group has helped to get to know the children better/informally.
- Timetabling – not had as much time with CT as originally anticipated but TA consistent across lessons.
- Having TA all the time means able to feedback from other lessons.



- Works well with the children together, eg. models manner etc. Good learning opportunity with positive adult relationships and have built good relationships between staff and students – rapport and trust.
- The children can confide in TA.
- Has been supportive to one particular child when things have not been good at home, not sure how he would have coped otherwise.

#### Feb '10

- *Very well, can see the changes in the group, a number of children now open up much more than they did at Circle Time.*
- *Have been able to pick up on other issues, eg. Dinners not being eaten, toileting problem.*
- *One particular Looked After Child is talking and joining in more about feelings/home situation.*

#### Jul '10

- Having base in mobile – away can go outside and link to SEN.
- Qualified member of staff - Teacher and subject areas taught, with primary background, this comes across with the children.

#### **4. Has the group of children worked well, was selection effective/group dynamics been effective?**

##### End Oct '09

- Small group of boys that still find it difficult to settle.
- Divider – immature boys and the girls are very different.
- Some have settled now really well, one boy who was distraught at first and not coping is doing much better now and enjoys the group.
- Friendships have formed.
- Two boys have moved up into higher Maths groups, which is good.

##### Feb '10

- *Circle Time is very positive – the group seems much more secure and talking more.*
- *Positively 'gelled' as a group mostly, still some ongoing issues.*

##### Jul '10

- T- would have had one boy out, always instigating name-calling. The mood would change if he was not there, dominant character who has not been good for the more vulnerable children.
- Generally no behaviour problems.
- Two boys are silly together, but needed the time, especially Circle Time they found hard. Better at 1:1 activities, they liked them.

#### **5. How were/have the children coped the rest of the time in school?**

##### End Oct '09

- ASD children are coping fine.- one boy is letting himself down with behaviour.
- TA has switched DT groups because of behaviour of others now in a different set to help with the more practical activities, which is working better.
- They are getting lots of detentions, 3 boys in particular.
- TA – have put notes in Teacher pupil's planner to ensure they are getting messages.
- One child has been awarded 'Lead Learner' for Maths.

##### Feb '10

- Ta noticing the difference in children from the NG to in other lessons – could do different Boxall Profiles almost for the same children.

- Behaviour concerns are able to be discussed in NG that have arisen outside in other lessons.

**6. How have the rest of the staff seemed to take to having this group in Year 7?**

End Feb'09

- T – don't get to go to staff briefing so difficult to pick up (as on duty).
- HT – seems pleased has told staff it is difficult and NG working well.
- T – difficult to tell really, quite a lot of staff would not teach the low ability children so don't really have an appreciation of their needs as far as other SEN.
- Staff are generally very busy.
- Some staff do appreciate there are behaviour problems.
- We plan to try and communicate more with parents via Homework online messages on a regular basis.
- Not sure if it will continue next year, have not really had feedback.
- Would like to be involved with Y7s into Y8 with some SEAL work.
- Don't often have time to get games out – do formal lessons like Maths etc.
- Some afternoons are quite lively.
- They all enjoy The Link – one child told another Teacher that it is more fun over here for Maths.

Feb '10

- *Yes they are aware, but do refer to it as 'Nurture' when it should be The Link.*
- *Other children do comment at times regarding the badly behaved children being able to play games etc. so needs to be a perception of work also.*

**7. What do you think the outcomes have been for the children?**

Jul '10

- Children with lower self-esteem – increased confidence in a number of children.
- Helped them to build on positive relationships. Support each other in 'big school' & transition support.

**8. What do you think the outcomes have been for the school as a whole?**

Jul '10

- Not carrying on next year due to staffing issues and small form intake next Year (4) according to HT.
- Some staff will say "they are one of yours" are aware of the group.
- Pastoral Coordinator has been more lenient with the children at times for some of the boys.

**Other Comments;**

Jul '10

- Overall very positive.
- Very much needed.
- Types of children – need this kind of provision, there will always be children here that need it.
- Could do with follow-up in Years 8 and 9, they will be lost in the system.
- Would have liked for it to continue.
- Been able to notice the needs of some children better – especially with TA in other lessons as a link person.